UPLAND GAME BIRDS

By

EDWYN SANDYS

and others

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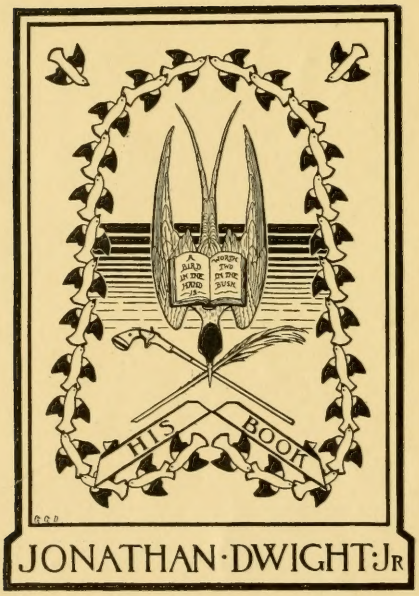
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UPLAND GAME BIRDS

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UPLAND GAME BIRDS

BY

EDWYN SANDYS
AND
T. S. VAN DYKE

ILLUSTRATED BY L. A. FUERTES, A. B. FROST
J. O. NUGENT, AND C. L. BULL

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By Edwyn Sandys

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UPLAND GAME

By Edwyn Sandys

UPLAND GAME

THE PARTRIDGE FAMILY

CLASS AVES — Order Gallinæ (gallinaceous birds — scratching on the ground like domestic fowl — also called Rasores, from the Latin "rasor," a scraper): having fowl-like feet.

Family Tetraonidæ — Grouse, partridges, quails, etc. Sub-families — *Odontophorinæ* (American partridges) and *Tetraoninæ* (grouse and ptarmigan).

Genus *Colinæ*, which includes (1) the Bob White, *C. virginianus;* (2) Texas Bob White, *C. v. texanus;* (3) Florida Bob White, *C. v. floridanus;* (4) Masked Bob White, *C. ridgwayi.*

Family Type — Body short, rounded, giving a plump appearance; feathers of crown slightly rounded and erectile, but not forming a true crest. Tail about three-fifths length of wing. Flight vigorous, whirring. Numbers 1, 2, and 3 much alike, sexes also showing close resemblance, except in color of throats and superciliary stripes. In color *C. ridgwayi* differs broadly from others. *C. virginianus* — total length, about 9½ inches; wing, 4½; tail, 2¾; tarsus, 1½; bill, ⅝. *C. v. floridanus* — total length, about 7¾ inches; wing, 4⅜; tail, 2¾; tarsus, 1¼; bill, ½. *C. v. texanus* — total length, about 9 inches; wing, 4½; tail, 2½; tarsus, 1¼; bill, ½. *C. ridgwayi* — total length, about 8½ inches; wing, 4½; tail, 2¾; tarsus, 1⅛; bill, ½.

THE QUAIL

Despite the leagues of virgin paper and gallons of ink which have been wedded to produce the story and the glory of the shooting of the Ameri-

can "quail," the interesting fact remains — there's no such bird.

If at the time of this writing there be true quail alive and free in the United States of America, either the birds or their immediate ancestors have been imported. The quail of the Bible story, the heaven-sent meat to the famished, was a true quail, but the bird is not a native of this country. And, in passing, it may not be out of place to remark that latter-day scientific knowledge only sustains, as it does in so many other instances, the absolute truth of the ancient record. Under conditions likely to prevail at a certain season of any year, great flocks of migrating quail not only might, but probably would, act as did their ancestors in days of old.

Nor is such a reference out of place in a sportsman's book. A true sportsman must be a true gentleman, and a true gentleman surely will not forget his Host while enjoying to the full the feast of good things and the glorious beauty of the place of entertainment provided for him. We of the generous craft, whose very name binds us to honorable deed and fair speech, — we who by virtue of that craft get so near to what is fairest and cleanest of earth, — shall we forget?

Some years ago an earnest but misguided attempt was made to introduce a true quail — the migratory variety. Sportsmen of different parts

of the country heard of the possibility of adding to our list of upland game, and money for the purpose was speedily forthcoming. It was the idea that the migratory quail could be brought here in sufficient numbers to establish the species. The original importations were released at various points in the Northern states and Canada early in spring, the promoters of the venture believing the birds would breed in the strange covers, and that their produce, at least, would establish their hereditary instinct by moving southward at the approach of cold weather and returning to their birthplaces the spring following.

Theoretically, this to the average sportsman appeared a simple proposition, but the more scientific minority were, to say the least, sceptical. All, however, were more or less interested and curious concerning the expected northern migration the following spring. When the season had swung round, tidings of the new game were eagerly awaited. The waiting proved a trifle over-long; indeed, it is extremely likely that the long-looked-for migrants, if ever they took to flight, forgot to turn about.

The fate of these birds is problematical. Turned loose at random as too many of them were, amid strange cover, food, and surroundings, and exposed to attack by various unfamiliar foes, perhaps the majority of them perished not far

from where they were released. The first severe weather may have destroyed the remainder; but if a few drifted southward in an attempt to reach their native land, the final long flight over sea was assuredly a feat far beyond their limited powers. The loss of these birds was no serious matter. Small, fast-running, lacking all the better qualities of their American namesakes, the migratory quail would at the best have been a very questionable addition to our list of game birds. Those who tried good dogs on them while the opportunity lasted, appeared to think that the famished Israelite of old did not eat quite enough.

Of the birds popularly known as "quail" in different parts of this country, scientists have recognized no less than thirteen varieties, some of which they have agreed to term "Bob Whites," while the others are "partridges." With the name Bob White, which was suggested by the well-known and musical call of the male bird, sportsmen need not quarrel — "A rose by any other name — " etc. The birds classified as Bob Whites include *Colinus virginianus*, the quail of sporting lore; *Colinus virginianus floridanus*, the Florida variety; *C. v. texanus*, of Texas and Mexico; and *C. ridgwayi*, the masked Bob White of southern Arizona and Mexico.

The partridges comprise a group in which are *Oreortyx pictus*, the mountain partridge of Cali-

fornia, Oregon, and Washington, which has been introduced into Vancouver Island; *O. p. plumiferus*, of California, Oregon, and Nevada; *O. p. confinis*, the San Pedro partridge of Lower California; *Callipepla squamata*, the scaled partridge of western Texas, New Mexico, southern Arizona, and valley of Mexico; *C. s. castaneigastra*, the chestnut-bellied scaled partridge of the lower Rio Grande valley, Texas, and northeastern Mexico; *Lophortyx californicus*, of the California coast, and introduced into Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia; *L. c. vallicola*, of California, Oregon, and Nevada; *L. gambeli*, of southern Utah, Nevada, northwestern Mexico, western Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California; and *Crytonyx montezuma*, the Massena partridge of western Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and the table-lands of Mexico.

All of these are beautiful, the oddest appearing being the curiously marked Massena partridge, with the plumage of which Nature appears to have worked when in a playful mood, so strangely are the almost startling markings arranged.

The Bob White has been placed at the head of the list for reasons good. Not one of his crested or more gayly marked relatives, near or remote, can approach him in sporting qualifications. He truly is the king of his race, and not alone that, for in the opinion of hosts of enthusiastic sports-

men he is the best bird that flies. Judged from the sportsman's point of view, no other bird appears to so exactly meet all requirements. Swift and small, he offers a sufficiently difficult mark to thoroughly test one's skill; prolific to an astonishing degree, he may be depended upon to hold his own under any reasonable conditions; a haunter of all sorts of ground, his pursuit ever presents the wearing charm of infinite variety; hardy and strong, he thrives under climatic conditions which few other game birds can endure; his limited wanderings seldom take him far from his native farm; he is there when wanted, and when secured his small, plump body is worthy a chef's supreme effort and a gourmand's unstinted praise. Add to all this his habit of lying well before dogs, and what more could sportsman true desire — especially when it is remembered that this prize package of golden qualities comes to us in a beautiful cover — for the plumage is what may be termed both pleasing and appropriate.

The Bob White is a widely distributed species, being found more or less abundant throughout the eastern United States from Maine to Florida. In the western portion of the province of Ontario it is plentiful, while west of the Mississippi its range extends to South Dakota, Missouri, and eastern Texas. It has also been introduced

into New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, California, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia. Throughout all this vast expanse of country it thrives and fulfils its fourfold mission, as martyr to the sporting spirit, food to the epicure and the ailing, a joy to the lover of nature, and as an extremely valuable assistant to the agriculturist. The quail truly is a bird of the farm, the camp-follower of the strong army of agriculture which is so steadily conquering the wild acres of the West. As the grain belt broadens, so does the range of Bob White extend. Himself no ploughman, yet he conscientiously follows the plough. He is the gleaner, who never reaps, who guards the growing crops, who glories over a bounteous yield, yet is content to watch and wait for those lost grains which fall to him by right. Shrewd foe to the foes of the farm, he hunts amid the crowding stems for skulking insect peril; and what he and his swarming tribe fail to detect, can work but small harm. His food consists of "mast," *i.e.* small acorns, beechnuts; grain of various kinds, notably buckwheat, corn, and wheat, millet, and a variety of small seeds, some of these being of the most troublesome weeds. These, of course, are the autumn and winter foods; at other seasons the diet is chiefly insectivorous, including ants and their larvæ, potato beetles, chinch bugs, cotton

worms, grasshoppers, crickets, the cutworm moth, and probably a few others which the farmer is glad to dispense with. In the destruction of these the quail performs a service the value of which, while it cannot be determined, unquestionably is great. Apropos of this point: lest some of the well-meaning but frequently misguided bird lovers should arise in their zealous misunderstanding of actual conditions and exclaim, "Then, if quail do this, they should not be shot!" it must be borne in mind that the entire protection of the quail would not mean a speedy increase of useful workers and a corresponding decrease of insect pests. The fact is, that quail will not stand overcrowding. If they did, it would be a simple matter to closely preserve a few thousand acres until the tract became literally alive with the birds. Experience has taught that a certain number of acres will carry only a certain number of quail. During the mating season, the males, like all gallinaceous birds, are extremely pugnacious, and the mated male will tolerate no possible near-by rival. Hence, too many birds would surely mean trouble, war, and confusion, and a consequent interruption of most important business. It is quite possible, too, that overcrowding would, as it does in the case of closely preserved grouse, cause disease.[1] In any

[1] England is suffering this season (1901) a considerable loss of its birds from this very cause. — EDITOR.

event the quail appear to settle the matter in a satisfactory way by scattering over the country, so that each brood may enjoy a range of its own.

The love-making of the quail is carried on with a dash and spirit worthy of so gamey a bird. Every resident of a quail country knows and loves the clear, sweet, often defiant whistle of "Bob White — Bob-bob — White!" which, in the Northeast, during May, is flung from fence to stump, to and fro across sun-kissed open and flowered mead. Amid the perfumed breath of new-waked blooms and tender growing things; when the soft air is a-tremble with glad bird voices, which plead for love from swaying frond, sweet upper air, and bosky dell, then brave, brown Bob feels the witchery of the season and boldly enters Love's fateful lists. It is a merry tourney, for small knights are bold, and fair maids somewhat coy. Suitors are many, sometimes too many, and the prizes must be fairly won. At first Bob is more of the sighing lover, — the minstrel 'neath his lady's bower, — and he contents himself with sending random love-notes by the mischievous breeze. From across his favorite field comes an echo of his ringing call — the voice of some ambitious rival! At once he is all attention. Does he hear aright? Can it be that insignificant little bird with which he shared quarters under the snow-laden brush-heap through half of the win-

ter just past? He will see to it, and at once! "Bob — White! Bob-bob — White — Bob — Whi-ite!!" Each cry is louder and sharper than its predecessor, the last "Whi-ite" being shaken with anger. And ever, like an echo, comes the reply, for the rival is as audacious and passionate as our doughty hero, and quite as ready to break a lance when bright eyes are willing to behold brave deeds. From the long-distance hurling of defiances the dispute gradually progresses to a tempestuous interchange of musical incivilities at short range. The pygmy warriors are comically in earnest. Each puffs himself up and struts about as though fairly bursting with rage, and there is much raising of crests, cocking of heads, and short racings this way and that. One runs to the top of an old ant-hill, and from this coign of vantage fairly shouts his desire for deadly combat; the other springs upon a fallen log and makes the air ring with requests for gore. Finally, they both reach an open space and catch sight of each other. Then there is a funny little fight, but a furious one while it lasts. They fight after the manner of small game chickens, but the action is much faster, and there is considerable savage biting and tenacious hanging-on by the short, strong bills. Feathers are pulled and broken, heads are pecked until a trace of blood appears, there is much cuffing by whirring wings

and striking by small feet, until one yields and slips away discomfited.

To the victor belongs the spoils; and while the panting hero is endeavoring to shout his triumph, forth from her secret hiding-place demurely steps the cause of all the trouble, the woman in the case, the trim, brown-throated hen. In all probability she has not cared a continental about either warrior. As the racing men put it, her business is to "pick a winner," and in so doing she merely plays her part in Nature's wonderful plan according to which the fittest survive for the perpetuation of the race. Some very pretty love-making follows, for my lady holds herself not too cheaply. Sir Knight, though fresh from victory bravely won, must still strut and coax and plead —nay! perchance fight it all over again with some new rival before she will bestow the favor he craves. At last she yields, and to her credit be it said that once mated, she is a model wife. It is questionable if her lord is equally irreproachable. Among well-informed sportsmen there is a belief, to which the writer inclines, that the quail is, at least to a certain extent, polygamous. It is no uncommon thing to find nests containing thirty or more eggs, which must have been deposited by more than one hen. The fact of these eggs hatching proves a mated hen, and not an unmated wanderer laying as domestic fowl do,

while the pugnacity of the cock forbids the theory of two pairs entering upon a joint housekeeping. It is therefore only reasonable to suppose that in some instances, at least, a single cock mates with two hens. Presumably, the young from such a nest would be cared for by the two hens. Be that as it may, the writer has often flushed broods of thirty-odd half-grown young which were accompanied by three mature birds, one cock and two hens, while other broods, almost if not quite as strong, would be with one cock and hen. Some of the confusion regarding this point has no doubt been caused by the fact of the hen frequently hatching two broods in a single season. In such cases the first brood is carefully cared for by the male, while his mate is brooding the second lot of eggs. When these are hatched the two broods unite, which accounts for the unusually large young bevies frequently described by sportsmen. The man who only studies the quail along the rib of a breech-loader knows the bird merely during the shooting season. To him a big bevy is a big bevy and nothing more, and he doesn't bother himself over the fact that some of his birds are a bit smaller and less developed than others. Slight differences which to a trained observer at once betray the two broods, are lost to the man who shoots for love of killing, and whose sole desire is for birds big enough to show his

friends and plentiful enough to keep his gun barrels hot.

The nest of the quail is built upon the ground, and usually it is well concealed. Favorite sites for it include the long growth about a fence or bush, an angle in the roots of an old stump or a thick tuft in a pasture. It may be under a log or the edge of a dry ditch, in the orchard or the hay-field, or even in some snug corner about a barn or outbuilding; wherever it be, its discovery is apt to be accidental. If in a hay-field, it may be arched over with interwoven grasses and have an entrance at one side. Occasionally this entrance is concealed by a short, roughly constructed, tunnel-like approach.

The nest is a puzzle in its way. At first glance one sees a startling array of snow-white, highly polished eggs, rather larger than the size of the bird would lead one to expect, and shaped like so many small peg-tops. The treasure house may have been located after a long search, but when found, you wonder how you failed to at once detect it. Then you marvel at the arrangement of the eggs, which are invariably closely packed, with the pointed ends downward. If you were foolish enough to take them out, the odds would be ten to one against your being able to put them back again, yet the wise little hen did it without hands or your boasted knowledge. Apropos of

this, the reader is hereby solemnly warned against touching the eggs or meddling in any way with the nest. Strange as it may appear, the hen can tell if her home has been invaded, and an immediate desertion of it is liable to follow, even though the eggs be almost hatched. When a nest has been accidentally disturbed, the eggs had better be taken than suffered to spoil. They are excellent eating, but a wiser disposition would be to place them under a bantam hen and have her raise the brood. The period of incubation is about twenty-four days; and providing the foster-mother be made to perform her duties within a suitable enclosure, the young may be raised without any great trouble. Only a close pen or a wire netting of small mesh will confine the active things until they have become sufficiently tame to be trusted.

My first attempt at rearing young quail ended in an awful tragedy. Five fresh eggs had been found and were placed under a reliable game bantam. A suitable netting was erected about the nest, and in due time five young quail made their appearance. They were transferred to a net-guarded grass run which included two large ant-hills. In a week the youngsters had become quite tame, whereupon a misguided but well-meaning person concluded to do a kindly act — in other words, meddle — and turned them loose. The bantam mother led them to the poultry

yard, which was presided over by a mighty light brahma cock. Now the bantam was game, and when the larger hens, who had forgotten her during the enforced absence, gave her stony stares, or, it may be, questioned the strict legitimacy of her curious progeny, she declared war. While she was battling against heavy odds, the fool brahma cock spied the tiny quail, which he calmly devoured. As the wee legs of the last one were disappearing, a slightly delayed but impetuous brickbat hit the brahma. He literally met his end gamely, but as he happened to be worth twenty-five dollars, a certain youthful naturalist took his meals standing up and slept on his stomach for at least one week. This sad experience, however, need not deter others from rearing quail. In suitable runs the birds will breed and prove most interesting pets.

In the natural state the male bird takes an occasional turn at covering the eggs. Young quail are extraordinarily active, being able to run as soon as they escape from the shell. They are exceedingly pretty, the upper parts a rich chestnut with buff below, the heads chestnut and buff with a dark line behind the eye, another on the forehead, and a spot at the angle of the mouth. When once the young have left the nest they are led by the parents to the best feeding-ground, and the spot of their birth knows them no more.

Both cock and hen are watchful guardians, and the first note of alarm from one or the other sends the young to cover with an amazing celerity. Either parent will simulate lameness to draw an intruder away from the skulking chicks.

A brood of young quail suddenly come upon in an open space will disappear as though the ground had swallowed them. They have a marvellous knack of diving under short grass and tiny leaves, and, once hidden, they will remain motionless until actually trodden upon. In anything like cover, a search for them would resemble the quest of the proverbial needle, while even upon almost bare ground only the sharpest eyes can locate them. Many writers have claimed that a chick will turn upon its back and cover itself with a leaf which it holds in position by its feet. This is, to say the least, extremely doubtful, especially as regards the holding of the leaf in any position by either feet or bill. A chick, in its rapid dart to cover, might turn upon its side, or even upon its back, under a leaf. In its anxiety to avoid any telltale movement, it might remain and be found in the awkward position, but to state that it deliberately seizes the leaf, turns over, and holds the screen in position, is going a bit too far. What it actually does, in all probability amounts to nothing more than an instinctive dive into the nearest cover, a motionless pause, and a trust to

coloration and the quail Providence. If those who may stumble upon a brood of quail will take a sportsman-naturalist's advice, they will promptly back away for a few yards, sit down, and remain silently watchful. No search should be attempted, for the searcher is more likely to trample the life out of the youngsters than to catch one. But if he hide in patience, he may see the old hen return, mark her cautiously stealing to the spot, and hear her low musical twitter which tells that the peril has passed. Then from the scant tuft here, from the drooping leaf yonder, apparently from the bare ground over which his eyes have roved a dozen times, will arise active balls of pretty down until the spot appears to swarm with them. And the devoted mother will whisper soft greetings to each, and in some mysterious manner will make the correct count, and then with nervous care shepherd them forward to where there is safer cover. And they will troop after her in perfect confidence, to resume their bug-hunting and botanical researches as though nothing important had transpired.

Young quail are busy foragers, and they grow rapidly. Within a few days after leaving the nest they are capable of a flight of several yards. A brood flushed by a dog will buzz up like so many overgrown grasshoppers, fly a short distance, then dive into cover in a comical imitation of the tactics

of their seniors. As insect catchers they are unrivalled, their keen eyes and tireless little legs being a most efficient equipment even for a sustained chase. The parents scratch for them and call them to some dainty after the manner of bantam fowls, and the shrewd chicks speedily grasp the idea and set to work for themselves. A tiny quail scratching in a dusty spot is a most amusing sight. The wee legs twinkle through the various movements, at a rate which the eye can scarcely follow, and the sturdy feet kick the dust for inches around. When a prey is uncovered it is pounced upon with amazing speed and accuracy, while a flying insect may call forth an electric leap and a clean catch a foot or more above the ground. As the season advances grain, seeds of various weeds, berries, wild grapes, and mast are added to the menu, in which insects still remain prominent. After the wheat has been cut the broad stubbles become favorite resorts, especially when they are crowded with ragweed. Patches of standing corn now furnish attractive shelter and the suitable dusting-places so necessary to gallinaceous birds. Quail, as a rule, go to feed early in the morning and again about mid-afternoon, lying up during the interval in some cosey nook which offers facilities for the dust-bath and a quiet siesta. Not infrequently the feeding-ground is a considerable distance from the mid-

day shelter, in which case the bevy may fly to and fro, instead of going afoot. When walking to their feeding-ground quail almost invariably stick close to whatever cover there may be, following a weed-bordered fence, a line of thicket, or some convenient furrow. This habit doubtless is a precaution against sudden attacks by hawks. Until the young birds are about two-thirds grown, the plumage is pale and washy-looking, presenting a mottled effect very unlike the richer coloration of the adults. The young are then termed by sportsmen "cheepers," or "squeakers," owing to the fact that when flushed they utter a hurried chirrup. At this stage they, of course, are unfit for shooting and only an out and out "potter" would draw trigger on them. Even after mid-October these immature broods are constantly met with, and frequently they are a nuisance in thick cover, where it is impossible to distinguish them from prime specimens. Dogs will stanchly point them, and about all a sportsman can do when he finds himself knocking down such undesirable wretches, is to call off his canine and try a new beat. As a rule these "squeakers" are a second brood, and the older lot may be somewhere close by. This point is well worth remembering. When once beyond the squeaker stage and wearing the garb of their parents, the young, while perhaps rather small, are fit quarry for any man.

Still, they lack the headlong dash of the old bird, and taken as they flush are comparatively easy marks. Your true sportsman does not enthuse over them. What he wants to hear is that peculiar hollow "Burr-r-r!" which marks the rising of a strong, fully developed bird. To the trained ear this sound is genuine music, and no veteran will mistake it for the less pronounced whirring of a younger wing, no matter how large the owner of that wing may appear to be. Trained eyes, too, can almost invariably detect the sex of the flushed bird. To the ordinary observer, the hen quail, with the exception of the stripe over the eye and the throat, is very like the male, but to the trained eye there is a marked difference. The general tone of the hen is brown, that of the male bluish gray. The difference is slight, but it is there, and a master of quail-shooting can detect it even in the brief glimpse of a fast bird going straight-away — of course in the open.

The adult male is marked as follows: forehead, stripe over the eye and throat, white; top of head, a mixture of chestnut and black; sides of neck, prettily marked with chestnut, black, and white (in many specimens the conspicuous stripe over the eye is tinged with buff); general tone of the back and wings, a mixture of chestnut, yellowish brown, and gray blotched on middle of the back with black; a black mark surrounds the

white of the throat. Breast and lower parts, buffy white, crossed with narrow wavy lines of black. Flank feathers, chestnut barred with black and edged with white; tail, bluish gray; under tail-coverts, chestnut marked with black. Bill, black; legs and feet, yellowish brown. Roughly speaking, the female is buff where the male is white; otherwise the markings are so similar that an unscientific eye would detect no difference. In sportsmen's parlance, — "white throat — cock; buff throat — hen." Cocks having the throat more or less buff are occasionally seen. In immature specimens the throat marks usually are a dirty gray. A full-grown quail is about nine and and one-half inches long. In the writer's opinion the largest and heaviest bird he has handled was a female. The size and markings vary considerably in different parts of the country. The finest birds seen by the writer were in western Ontario and Pennsylvania. The Florida birds are smaller and darker in color. Pennsylvania sportsmen frequently speak of what they term "willow-legged quail," thereby meaning a bird with a greenish-tinted leg and which they claim is a trifle larger and finer than the ordinary type. Of a number of birds examined, none showed this peculiarity, all closely resembling the best Ontario specimens. The most familiar call is, of course, the sweet "Bob-white" of the male during the spring and

early summer, which in different sections is also translated into "More wet — no more wet," "More wheat — no more wheat," and "Buck-wheat — no buck-wheat." The last is a close imitation and has a tinge of the dry humor of the typical farmer, who knows how fond the bird is of that useful grain. The rallying call, after a bevy has been scattered, is loud and vibrant with tender anxiety. A well-known authority puts it thus — *Quoi-i-hee, quoi-i-hee;* others twist it into "Where-are-you? Where-are-you?" The writer's ear may be at fault, but to him it sounds very like *Ka-loi-hee, Ka-loi-hee*, especially when the old hen is doing the calling. There are many variations of it too, *Whoil-kee* representing a common one. It is an open question if the cock utters this call, although some accomplished sportsmen have claimed that he does. The writer has been a close observer of quail and would think nothing of calling young birds almost to his feet, yet he has never been able to trace this call to the old male, that is, as a rallying call to the brood. He is well aware that young males use it in replying to the mother, but he has yet to see a male of more than one season utter it. Apropos, if during the mating season a good whistler will conceal himself and reply to the Bob-whiting of some amorous male, he can draw the bird across even a broad field. The small fellow will reply louder

and louder and will get madder and madder and will draw nearer and nearer until he is perhaps only a few yards distant and full of fight. Then let the whistler utter a defiant "Bob-white," and suddenly change to a low, tender *Ka-loi-hee* and note the effect upon Bob. In an instant he is a fussing, fuming, irresponsible small devil, racing here and there with dragging wings, and so excited that he can hardly sputter out his challenges. A repetition of the *Ka-loi-hee* may bring him booming on reckless wings almost into the observer's face. Now, if this *Ka-loi-hee* be not a hen's call, and a suggestion to him that his hen is playing tricks with a stranger — "what's he fussin' about?" The quail utters other sounds. While feeding it may be heard to twitter in a low, satisfied sort of way. A winged bird running, or an uninjured one running from under brush, preparatory to taking wing, frequently voices a musical *tick-tick-tick-a-woy*. A bird closely chased by a hawk emits a sharp cackling, expressive of extreme terror. Quite frequently a bevy just before taking wing passes round a low, purring note — presumably a warning to spring all together. When the hen is calling to scattered young, she sometimes varies the cry to an abrupt *Ko-lang*, after which she remains silent for some time. This the writer believes to be a hint to the young to cease calling — that the danger still threatens, and is prompted

by her catching a glimpse of dog or man. A bevy travelling afoot keeps up what may be termed a twittering conversation, and there is a low alarm note, like a whispered imitation of the cry of a hen when a hawk appears.

Toward the latter part of September, a spirit of restlessness appears to disturb the earlier broods which are then nearly fully grown. They shift about their native farm, being found now in one field, again in another. In a few days, in an average season about the first of October, this restlessness becomes more pronounced until it almost assumes the nature of a partial migration — if indeed it be not that in the proper sense of the term. The bevies appear to drift across country, and for a week or so are very unsettled. This may be a trace of some old-time migrating habit, but that point had best be left to some purely scientific court. Certain it is that the birds travel sometimes for miles. It is this movement which causes so many bevies to suddenly appear in the gardens of villages, towns, and not infrequently within the lawn enclosures of important cities. Just why the birds travel is not readily explained. They are not in quest of food, for they will leave excellent ground only to finally locate, maybe miles away, upon ground not one whit better, while other quail will move into the vacated territory. It is a curious movement and a matter

which even our shrewdest observers do not appear to thoroughly understand. All the writer can say about it is that beyond question it takes place; that it does not seem to be an easy staging toward suitable winter quarters, for the best of ground will be passed by, but rather an uneasy, haphazard drifting about the period of the turning of the leaf. The theory that the disturbance by late harvesting operations, like corn-cutting, starts the birds moving will not hold, for they move from undisturbed territory the same as from any other. The only solution seems to be that the remote ancestors of the quail were migrants and that the old-time instinct has not yet been entirely eradicated. If we knew that the movement always trended in the one direction, the solution of the problem might be more easily attained, but unfortunately the proof of the birds' moving along any defined course appears to be lacking. The fact that these drifting birds seem to be in every case full-grown rather strengthens the theory outlined. Nor is this theoretical migration to be confounded with the shorter movement toward cover as the cold weather asserts itself. This latter is merely a quest for the warmest available quarters, and is no more migration than is the movement of a fowl which roosts during autumn in an apple tree, but seeks the more comfortable fowl-house when the pinch of winter comes.

Quail, when undisturbed, are very regular in their habits, being in this respect not unlike domestic poultry. Shortly after sunrise they are busy seeking food, and after crops are well filled they seek the lounging and dusting places, there to rest and enjoy themselves until time for the afternoon foraging. As dusk approaches they move to the chosen sleeping place, and at this hour there is apt to be considerable calling from one to another. The "roost," if that term may be used, very frequently is in a mat of low cat-briers, or thickly growing weeds. In such shelter the birds squat upon the ground, usually in a rough circle with heads pointing out. This, presumably, is a precautionary arrangement against a night attack by some prowling foe. Under ordinary conditions the bevy will return to the same spot for many nights in succession. Proof of this is furnished by the accumulation of droppings, which after a time become quite conspicuous. The often advanced claim that quail always roost upon the ground is not true. As a rule they do, and in some sorts of country they must, but it is no uncommon thing to find them regularly roosting in such places as a mass of wild grape-vines attached to a fence or tree, in some thick, bushy tree, in an apple tree near the poultry, sometimes in the fowl-house, barn, or stable, on the lower rails of a weedy fence, on

top of logs, and occasionally on the bare rails of a fence. Only the belated sportsman, who has blundered upon them while trying to climb a fence in the dark, can rightly describe the thrill caused by the unexpected and thunderous flush. Speaking of noisy flight — a peculiarity of quail lies in the fact that the characteristic resonant "Burr-r-r!" of the startled bird is not invariably heard when a single one, or a bevy, rises unalarmed. The writer repeatedly has seen whole bevies flush with no more noise than might be caused by an equal number of sparrows, and single birds rising and flying toward a caller seldom if ever make any noticeable whirring. Again, when calling, he has seen birds silently rise and fly within a few yards, then sheer off on noisy wings as they caught sight of him. The same thing is true of that thunder-winged fellow, the ruffed grouse. It may be the noisy flush has a purpose in an attempt to momentarily startle and confuse an enemy.

The habits of the quail vary with the weather and season. During windless, warm days, after the first flush, they will scatter and lie like so many stones. Should the day be very humid, or if rain be falling, they may refuse to lie at all and run like "quarter horses," perhaps for hundreds of yards, then flush wild, pitch, and again run on. In bleak, windy weather they are apt to be

very wild, to refuse to lie to the best of dogs in the open, and to whizz away in long flight to the heavy timber. During a snow-storm, too, the chances are in favor of their acting in a most erratic manner. These are bad times for dog and man, and to make a good bag is well-nigh an impossibility. Under these conditions, too, they are given to that exasperating trick, treeing, after the first flush, and when quail take to the trees the sportsman's lot is not a happy one. The best thing a man can do then is to leave those birds for the day and seek another bevy; for he will not, of course, pot them as they sit, even should he be able to make them out, which is no easy matter in tall timber.

A marked peculiarity attributed to the quail, and one over which many able writers have disagreed, is their alleged power of withholding body-scent at their discretion. "Can quail withhold their scent?" has been the subject of many an inky tourney. That they do voluntarily, or involuntarily, temporarily withhold body-scent has been claimed by many a veteran who has seen dogs of unquestioned high class utterly fail to locate birds where they have been marked down. The writer has seen such things happen — nay! he has even seen a rare good dog actually step on a bird and never dream of its presence till it flushed under his belly, yet that did

not prove any mysterious power on the bird's part of controlling its scent. The fact was that the quail in question had just completed what might be termed an air bath — a cleansing rush through pure air — it had pitched and squatted where it struck without running at all, thus leaving no foot-scent; it was badly scared and had its plumage compressed about it as tightly as possible, and all these things combined for the moment prevented the spread of the telltale odor. By squatting where it struck, the bird literally covered its tracks, *i.e.* it was over the spot where its feet had touched. Had it run even a few strides, the questing nose would surely have found the trail. The explanation that a dog, fresh from a point, may have his "nose so full of scent" that he is unable to detect a faint trail, is no explanation at all. Good dogs often point newly pitched quail while in the act of retrieving a bird just killed. A dog of the writer's, while holding a quail in his mouth with the wing directly across his nostrils, once pulled up on another bird which had not been in its hiding-place more than a minute. Then, if ever, would his nose have been "full of scent," yet he was able to pin the live bird, because in all probability it had run to its hiding-place.

THE SHOOTING OF THE QUAIL

While "to teach the young idea how to shoot" is not the exact purpose of this chapter, perhaps a few remarks concerning the outfit and certain "wrinkles" anent field-shooting may not be out of place. So long as individual tastes differ there will be variations of opinion concerning that most important thing, — the gun. Many men prefer an exceedingly light arm, claiming, and this correctly enough, that a light, small gauge calls for the greater skill, and, like the fragile, feather-weight trout rod, is the only thing fit for the hand of a master. That is all very well, but it may be carried too far. During the early part of the season, when birds are young and uneducated, when there is cover everywhere and a bird seldom flushes more than a yard or so from one's boot, almost any small gun will answer. At this time, too, the weather is apt to be warm, under which condition the reduction in weight of arm and ammunition is a decided advantage. The decrease in the killing range is then a matter of small consequence, for the great majority of shots, except second barrels, will be at thirty yards and under. This may appear very close, but a few actual measurements will verify the statement. In point of fact, the average kills of a fairly quick shot will be at a range of about twenty to twenty-

five yards or less. At such a distance, the smallest of guns should, in good hands, prove sufficiently effective, but that is not the important point. If a gun be of fourteen, sixteen, or twenty gauge, it needs must be of first-class grade to be reliable and safe to use. Hence, a man must have a special gun for, say at a liberal estimate, the first half of the season; and later on, after the birds have become educated and the cover is not so abundant, the shooting range is materially increased, whereupon the small gun is at once at a disadvantage. Worse than that, entirely owing to lack of power, the use of it in skilled hands is certain to mean a lot of wounded birds. Then, again, the small gun is good only for close-rising quail, woodcock, and snipe, which means that a second, heavier gun must be kept for all-round work. In this event, the change of arm is not calculated to improve one's shooting. Another disadvantage of the smaller guns lies in the difficulty of procuring suitable ammunition in an emergency. Of course, the resident of a large city may readily buy shells of any size and load, but quail-shooting is not a characteristic sport of the streets of a large city. The best of it is found where stores are few and rush orders not a specialty; hence, an accident or a misdirected package may mean the ruination of a hard-earned holiday. Any mishap to the man using the odd-

sized gun may prove a genuine disaster, while the man with the twelve-gauge may restock from any country store, or, if in the field, borrow from his comrade or any one he may meet. The reader will readily understand the importance of these points, and when it is remembered that the sole advantage of the smaller gun lies in the trifling reduction of weight, the choice becomes a simple matter. I have tried arms by many makers and of all practical sizes, and I unhesitatingly recommend a twelve-gauge, by a first-class firm and of weight, etc., to suit the individual. If the novice decides to purchase the best obtainable he will make no mistake, for a really fine gun, like a fine watch, properly cared for, should last a lifetime. It should, of course, be a hammerless ejector, the safest and most efficient gun now available, and if it weigh between seven and eight pounds it will be the proper thing for ninety-nine out of one hundred men. Equally, of course, the powder should be of the smokeless brand, for the less suspicion of smoke the better for the chances of the second barrel, particularly in cover-shooting and upon dark, humid days.

The costume is also worthy of attention. One of the best consists of medium-weight, dead-grass color duck for coat, vest, and pants, and duck or felt hat, or a corduroy cap to match. The boots should be of the recognized shooting pattern,

waterproof if possible, but above all they should fit. A man on a long tramp is like a horse; he is only as good as his feet, and hardly too much care can be exercised over the boots and socks. All underwear should be of light, pure woollen fabric, which will prevent chill after a wetting or during a long ride. The handiest place for the shells is an outside pocket, for if the coat be properly made the weight of them will not interfere with free action of the arms. Bags, belts, and vest devices for carrying shells come under the general head of infernal nuisances.

And now an extremely important question, — the dog! So long as he be a free ranger, of good nose, intelligent, and properly broken, he may be either pointer or setter. Both are good, equally good, taking the season through. By reason of his coat the pointer is better for warm weather, and he can travel on less water than the setter, while for the same reason he seldom is so good for cold, rough work, especially in thorny cover or coarse grass. In actual merit, including bird sense, speed, nose, and staying qualities — in fine, every hunting quality — they rank about even. The pointer is apt to be the better for the man who can only occasionally go afield, as he will keep steady on less work, while to all but a pointer man, the setter is the more beautiful and companionable dog. Of the merits of the

three prominent breeds, Llewellin, Irish, and Gordon, a little may here be said appropriately — possibly their proper rank should be in order as named.

Breeders of the modern Llewellin setter, encouraged by the racing methods of field trials, have bred for a combination of speed and style likely to catch a judge's eye. They have lost a deal of the beauty of the original type, as exemplified by famous old Llewellins and Laveracks, but they have produced a racing machine, and what frequently is certainly a rare good dog for an athletic and keen man. The typical Llewellin now is a compact bundle of running gear, not so desirable a companion maybe, but certainly a bird finder. The actual value of the type depends upon the individual called upon to give the decision. Many sportsmen would prefer the handsomer and perhaps staider animals of a few years ago. The development of a breed to a point where we find two types, — one to look at, the other to race, — *i.e.* "bench type" and "field type," may or may not be good for the best interests of that breed.

The Irish setter, as he should be, is a strong, intelligent, wiry dog, somewhat hard to break and control, but a rare good one when firmly and wisely handled. The chief objection to him as a field worker is based upon his color. However beautiful the true mahogany red may be, it is

extremely difficult to locate when the dog is halted among rotten logs, stumps, and cover wherein various shades of red and brown predominate. The same objection applies to the Gordon, to the all-black, all-roan, or to any other coat inconspicuous in color. Of course, in the open, the coat is not so important, but in average quail-shooting work in cover represents fully three-fourths of the task; hence, the best coat is a conspicuous mixture of dark and white, which may be easily seen both in thick cover and against a snowy background.

Quail-shooting, early in the season, is comparatively easy. The birds flush almost underfoot, they fly only moderately fast, and they cannot carry off much shot. The chief obstacle to good scores is thick cover; were it not for this, an ordinarily good shot should grass about three-fourths of his birds. Later on it is different; then half the birds, taking them in and out of cover, would be an excellent average for the season. A few suggestions to the novice may not be out of place.

First, if you have a good dog, let him alone — keep your eye on him, but let him run. Avoid all bawling of commands, because the sound of the voice is apt to cause an untimely flush when otherwise the bevy might have lain close. Direct the dog by whistle and signals — birds

appear to pay no attention to the shrilling of a dog whistle. Send a dog into a field from the lee side whenever possible, then naturally he will beat up wind with everything in his favor as it should be. He will go up-wind to his birds (the first time anyway), so, if you prefer a straightaway shot, you may go up-wind to the dog and thus secure it in the majority of cases. Cultivate the habit of examining the ground near your feet, while at the same time not losing track of the dog's movements. The droppings and dusting places of the birds are at once detected by a practised eye, and there may be a shed feather here and there which will give you a line on the age of the bevy. Should the dog seem to find scent, yet fail to locate, study the lay of the land, particularly the nearest cover. If the ground "sign," as just mentioned, indicates that birds frequent the field, the chances are that while the dog has found scent, the birds are elsewhere. They may have been recently flushed by some one belonging in the neighborhood, by a hawk, or some four-footed foe — perhaps a cat. In any event they will almost certainly have gone to cover, and probably are not more than three or four hundred yards away. Of course dog tracks, footprints, or empty shells will indicate that somebody has worked the piece ahead of you. If no sound of shooting comes from the cover, it is open to you; but if

you hear shooting, don't rush over and plunge into some other man's sport. There is no harm, however, in a gentlemanly investigation and a sportsmanlike meeting with the other fellow. You may make a charming acquaintance and double forces for the day to mutual advantage. But in true field courtesy the rights of the situation are his, and no sportsman will go into action without an invitation from the man working on the game. These little matters are well worth attention, for the observance of the unwritten law is what distinguishes the sportsman from the fellow out gunning.

Let us imagine the opening day of an average season, — bright warm weather, the leaves still on all growths, and the usual crop of weeds and burrs up to standard. The sun has been up two hours, and two men and one good dog are ready for business. The ground to be worked is typical of the East, divided into medium-sized fields, which means many fences with weedy cover about them and a tree here and there along the side-lines. A rough classification of the fields would be one-fourth wheat-stubble, one-fourth standing corn, one-fourth rough pasture, and the remaining fourth a combination of stump-lot, thicket, and standing timber. Of such is the kingdom of — rare good quail country! that is, it is, or should be. If there happen to be a trifle of air stirring, so much the

better, but the seasonable lack of it will not greatly matter.

From the top of the fence you scan the ground and decide upon how it may best be worked. You, being wiser than your comrade, elect yourself to the presidency with full powers to force any emergency legislation and to veto anything that doesn't suit your book. Because it is still early, you know that the quail may not have finished breakfast, so you order a skirmish through the stubble. You take the collar off the dog, to prevent a useless drag, or a possible hanging at some fence, and bid him, "Hi on!" As he darts away you slip into the weather berth, *i.e.* upon the right of your comrade, if he be a right-handed man. Some overlook the marked advantages of this position, but you will not do so because you know that should your companion accidentally discharge his gun the shot can hardly come anywhere near you. It is better so, as it is better in case of accidents that the other fellow should prove pattern, penetration, and whatever else may be decided. An artist in his line will walk along the big furrow at the windward side of the field and will keep a keen eye on the ground for the telltale whitish droppings. Meanwhile, the dog is cutting out his ground to signal by whistle and hand, and presently he slows a bit, perhaps lowers his nose, and by increased stern action

shows that he has found scent. Then up goes his head and there begins that beautiful and impressive movement "roading," or "drawing," which ends with the confident "point," which never fails to stir the very heartstrings of a true sportsman. Your dog has them; and now see that you prove your superior intelligence by aiding instead of bothering him.

There is no occasion for quickening your pace, or for any of the foolishness of which too many men are guilty. Don't bawl at the dog, or go tearing through the stubble as though you imagined the dog to be an unreliable fool. Your voice may cause the birds to flush, and any show of excitement will only shake the dog's sublime confidence in your superiority and perhaps make him unsteady. Keep your eye on him, and should he appear to be wavering, steady him with a low "To-ho!" otherwise keep your mouth shut. Ten to one he'll hold the point, for both dogs and horses appear to understand when they are implicitly trusted, and to behave their best in return. Still keeping to the right of your comrade, move steadily forward. The rustle of approaching feet may possibly cause the dog to twitch a bit, but a low caution will remedy that. Should he show signs of an inclination to break point, check him sharply and make him hold it for a few minutes while you wait. This discipline is good for him

and not bad for you, indeed a regular dose of it may prevent serious faults. As a general rule birds found as described will flush when the guns have approached within a few yards. As they go up the dog should go down, and remain down until ordered up. Most dogs are broken to drop to wing and to shot, *i.e.* to go down upon their bellies. This prevents any attempt at chasing or other fool capers, and so far is a useful accomplishment. There are, however, objections to it. A dog down flat cannot see what is going on, and when his head is buried in thick and perhaps dusty growth, he gets the least pure air at a time when he needs the most. For these reasons the writer's dogs are allowed to sit down instead of dropping. In this position they get all the air they need, they can see the kills, and, more important, mark down whichever birds may be only wounded, or unwounded birds that may have caught their eye. Some dogs become very clever at marking down, and this extra accomplishment frequently proves extremely valuable.

It is an unwritten law among sportsmen that there should be no cross-firing. The man on the left is supposed to shoot at birds going to the left, or at those at the left of the bevy should it drive straight away. The man on the right governs himself accordingly, which prevents that annoying thing, two guns discharged at the same bird,

or, that still more annoying misunderstanding about who scored. Systematic shooting is not only more pleasant, but it bags more birds, as can be readily imagined. When only one bird is expected, true courtesy will prompt the better shot to allow his companion the first chance, or if the men be equally good marksmen, the host should give the first chance to his guest. In so doing virtue may be its own reward, for there is nothing in the articles of war to prevent a strictly courteous man from wiping a duffer's eye the moment after he has missed! When a doubt exists as to what may flush, "Your bird," or "Take the bird" from one or the other will settle the point. And it is well to observe these small matters, for some excellent men are hasty when their blood is up, especially after they have missed a few times. True sportsmanship never touches a man on a raw spot. Good-natured chaff is all very well, but a rather dangerous form of amusement in the field, where a single injudicious remark may mar the pure pleasure of an hour, or perchance of a day. There are many men who cannot score regularly on bevies, while they are able to perform quite creditably on single birds which they walk up for themselves. The reason for this usually is nervousness, partly due to the close proximity of the second gun, and partly to the startling flush of a number of birds together. In nine

cases out of ten, a nervous man shoots too quickly. He is so worked up and so full of what he intends to do, that he pulls trigger before the gun is where it should be and then, if he uses the second barrel, he rattles it in somewhere about the general direction. This, of course, is no way to shoot, and a comical feature about it is that every now and then the haphazard method kills — possibly on a certain lucky day, for several times in succession. Then the nervous man grows idiotically enthusiastic, and declares that he has just caught the hang of it. On some other day he begins by missing, gets rattled, and makes a mess of things generally, whereupon he adds to his excitement by losing his temper and usually winds up by fluently cursing the dog, or the gun, or the shells. Young sportsmen should remember that exhibitions of temper and foolish attempts at explanation are sure indications of inferior skill and bad manners. In crisp contrast is the veteran's perhaps mirthful "I was behind," or "too low," in explanation of his failure. He well knows where lay the fault, and instead of prating about it, forms a grim resolve to remedy it the next opportunity.

There is no need for undue haste in quail shooting in the open. The birds, as a rule, rise within a few yards, more often than not from almost under foot, and almost invariably their

speed is overestimated even by old hands at the game. A little stepping-off of the ground after the kill will prove this. What looked like forty-five yards will turn out to be about ten yards less, and it holds good of shorter distances. Indeed, a quail actually forty odd yards from the gun would appear to be a very long shot. In cover, the great majority of shots are at a range less than thirty yards. If any one doubt this, let him hang up a bird, then step off thirty yards, and turn and look. What he sees will teach him something about distances in cover.

The first bird (early in the season) to show above the cover is apt to be the old hen. This is because she is surely the strongest and wisest of the lot and the natural leader. Presumably, too, she it is who gives the signal when to take wing, else it would be hard to account for the almost even start which all usually get. Later in the season she frequently is last away, but that is another matter. She has the noisiest wing, and she is likely to show larger than the others. Pick her out, if you can (trained eyes can do it), and knock her over there and then. Never mind the others, give her both barrels if required, but stop her! The reason for this is simple enough. A number, perhaps the majority of the bevy, assuredly will follow her to cover and will pitch near where she does. So long as she is with

them, the young birds will neither call nor respond to the most clever imitation of the rallying pipe. With her out of the way, the youngsters are like so many lost lambs, only too ready to respond to even a crude imitation of the loved voice of their shepherd. The habit of looking for the old hen has another value. It helps a man to learn how to pick his birds — a most important feature of steady shooting. When he can do this, and has learned to lead all quarterers according to distance, to hold high on straightaways about as high as his head, low on low-flying straightaways and dead on incomers, and to pull trigger with the finger and not with the hand and arm, and to do it without stopping the smooth swing of the gun, — he should be quite a quail shot.

Just after the bevy has gone, and when one or more birds are down, is when the novice or the over excitable man makes serious blunders. The first thing to do is to stand in your tracks and reload, the dog meanwhile being down. Keep him so for the moment, then calmly order him on, either to retrieve, or to point dead, according to his training. Few novices realize the full importance of a leisurely, methodical deportment. Dogs are clever judges of character, and a brainy brute is quick to measure his man. Any undue excitement, or flurried haste to secure the game,

will give the dog the tip that he is out with a man with whom he may take liberties, and he surely will act upon it. This is why so many dogs, which are paragons of perfection when under the eyes of their trainer, act so unruly when loaned for a day or so; this is why, too, an otherwise faultily good-natured man will sternly refuse to loan his dog. To dog owners the writer would earnestly say, — never lend a fine dog, except to a man who knows more about dogs than you do, and even then make sure that the borrower understands your methods and words of command, else he may start talking what, to the poor dog, may sound like Chinook, or Chinese, or Esquimaux, or anything that is utterly unintelligible. A dog is a poor linguist, and for this and other good reasons the fewer and more sharply distinct the words of command, the better. Never roar at a dog, you are supposed to be the more intelligent animal of the two; and if you never bawl your commands, the dog will never guess that you possess the power to do so, and in the field he will heed a firmly quiet command as though it were the harshest you were capable of delivering. Also omit the too common cursing. The dog is clean-minded, and so does not understand; while a volley of profanity can only kill the man's self-control, and possibly some of his fun in the Happy Hunting-grounds. Keep all

conversation with the dog clean and crisply short — he will then better grasp your meaning. A loud-voiced, foul-mouthed man is unfit company for a true sportsman.

In the event of a bird being winged, and what is termed "a runner," keep the dog firmly in hand, unless he has already been ordered to retrieve. In that event, of course, he should be allowed to do his best to carry out the original order. Too much chasing of runners is bad for most dogs; in a majority of cases it probably would be better to lose the bird than to rattle the dog by a scuffling pursuit. Especially is this true of young dogs, for in their excitement over perhaps a flying catch, they are apt to develop an undesirable hardness of mouth. Old, wise fellows may safely be allowed considerably more liberty. Above all, let the man control himself. The sight of a joint pursuit by a team composed of a maniac and a temporarily rabid animal is, to say the least, somewhat depressing. Another and a most important matter following the first flushing of the bevy is "marking down," *i.e.* keeping a sharp eye on the birds, and carefully noting just where they pitch. Attention to this is most valuable, not alone in the saving of time, but as a preventative against uselessly working a dog over ground far from the hidden quarry. Some men become masters of marking. They

shoot with both eyes wide open, which is much the better way, because they can keep track of the movements of more birds than the one aimed at. Such men see everything there is to be seen; they can distinguish cocks from hens in full flight; their field of vision is broader and truer than can possibly be commanded by the man who closes one eye; in consequence, they are apt to be consistent performers and most useful and entertaining companions. They are the men who while shooting well can always tell you where your bird fell or if you killed, when you are in doubt. They know just where the birds have pitched, where the stragglers, if any, have gone, and, in fact, all about everything worth knowing. It is a wise plan to shoot cocks in preference to hens whenever the choice rests with the gun, with the single exception of the old hen referred to. In the case of crossing birds, the distinction is easy enough, and the intentional sparing of a hen now and then really is something akin to a good investment. As a general rule, there are more cocks than hens in a bevy, and the killing-off of the cocks is apt to be followed by a more peaceful, hence more productive, breeding season. When a hen goes whirring away by herself, as frequently happens, and pitches at a point a safe distance from where the main flight has gone, she should not be fol-

lowed. A little of this wise forbearance now and then will do much to keep up the stock of game.

It was once the writer's fortune to enjoy a month's outing with one of those royal good fellows, a British sportsman-soldier of the genuine stripe — a high-bred, accomplished, game man, who has since proved his heroism to the reading world. He had shot in most corners of creation, but he wanted to learn about quail. One day things were unsatisfactory, as they sometimes will be, and a hard morning's work had accomplished nothing. At last the dog pulled up in grand style on my side of the beat. In reply to a hail, the captain signalled to go on and flush. There were but two birds, both hens, and they were allowed to depart in peace.

"What was the matter, old chap?" he asked. "You should have stopped that brace."

"Seed hens," was the reply.

"S-e-e-d h-e-n-s! Why, what the devil are seed hens?" was his amazed query.

The mystery was explained, and from his experience with pheasants he had learned to appreciate that sort of thing, but the term "seed hens" greatly amused him. Every now and then he'd mutter the words over, and his mighty shoulders would shake with mirth. Later in the day there was lively sport and a hot, impromptu race, for both guns were at their best. At last a brief

halt was called for a bite, after which he pulled out nearly a score of fine birds for inspection. He was as happy as a big, care-free boy, for he had shot in perfect form, and was delighted with his new game; but suddenly his merry comments ceased, and his face crimsoned. He had just noticed the brown throats of half his prizes, and a horrible thought troubled him.

"Great h-e-a-v-e-n-s!" he gasped, "I've been shooting hens — s-e-e-d h-e-n-s!"

He looked as though he wished the earth would open and take him in, but fortunately the remedy was at hand. A quick showing of the other bag, which contained a fair proportion of both sexes, reassured him; but, as he expressed it, he had had "a bad turn." When the outing was done, he went back to his regiment, and was in all probability the best quail shot on the roll. Years passed, and his regiment, with many another, was in the field. A town full of women and children was besieged and in desperate straits. There was a forced march to the rescue. Later to the writer came a letter addressed in a perfectly villanous scrawl. The writing inside was worse, and it ran — "Dear old Chap — Pardon left maulie — I lost the other and a lot of the arm. Must practise one-handed. But we saved the *s-e-e-d h-e-n-s!*" He had not forgotten during all those years. What the women he so gallantly

rescued might think of that note doesn't matter. The young sportsman who aspires to become a crack quail shot should pay heed to the rallying call, and learn to imitate it to perfection. Any one possessed of an ear can easily master it. For short distances, whistling through the lips alone will admirably serve; but for long-range calling the writer inserts the tips of thumb and finger between his lips and produces a sound which may be distinctly heard for a quarter of a mile or more. There need be no fear of calling too loudly, provided it be correctly done. A quail close at hand raises an astonishing row. After the first flush, the birds generally speed to their favorite cover; and once within its shelter, if the day be fair, they will lie like stones. As a usual thing, the cover of the North consists of one of the following: a bit of wood; a thicket of tall, slim saplings; a field of standing corn; a patch of briers; a fence overgrown with vines and tangled stuff; a big slashing, with fallen trunks and stumps and piles of brush here, there, and everywhere; a large, dry ditch with overhanging grass at the sides and a thick, short growth of weeds at the bottom; a "dirty" field, *i.e.* one wild with burrs, thistles, etc., waist-high; the brushy banks of a stream; a bit of almost dried marsh, and last, but not least, the broad, frequently briery ditches either side of a railroad track.

Here is, indeed, an infinite variety, and the man who can score fairly well in all of it is to be envied.

Now the working of it: the first thing is to take a smoke, a pleasant way of allowing time for the scent to become good. If the birds have taken to the woods, but have not treed, they will be found under logs, in the crannies of roots, or among the leaves on the ground. Such conditions frequently mean many fair chances, but sometimes in a baffling light. The method of beating should be the same as in the open, with the exception that the dog may be made to work closer with advantage. Not infrequently a brace or so will be promptly located, but there will be a difficulty in finding the major portion. After a fair trial has failed, call in the dog, go back near where the bevy was flushed, and begin calling loudly. The old hen has been bagged, and you are playing her rôle. Do not call too much. Make it so — *Ka*-LOI'-*Hee'! Ka*-LOI'-*hee! Ka*-LOI'-*hee!* — three times (emphasize second syllable), and occasionally four, and with the proper pause between. Indistinct and too hurried calling sounds like a young bird, which, while it may elicit a response from some impatient youngster, lacks the magic of the message from the old hen. If this oft-recurring old lady has not been already conveniently killed, she may presently pipe up

from somewhere. If so, get after and exterminate her as promptly as may be, for the craftiest of imitators cannot compete with the real thing. The reason why she must now be killed is because otherwise she will gather the lot around her within a few minutes, whereupon the next flush becomes precisely what you don't want, — a bevy flush, — and most likely a further flight into what may prove most troublesome cover. As each bird answers, mark its place by the sound, then send the dog about his business. No fear now about the scent. When a bird calls, it has moved, — it won't call from its hiding-place, — and once it has moved it has betrayed itself to the dog. The rest will depend upon the guns.

Have the birds gone to thicket or other stuff too tall to see over and so thick as to render shooting extremely difficult? Then there are two ways open. One, the honest man's way, is to smash boldly in, to keep the agreed-upon distance from your friend, and to beat squarely through. This means a rake across the nose every now and then from some thorny growth, a tripping over briers, an occasional difficult shot, and a little — just a little — spicy talk when a bird roars up between your legs and whisks away where you cannot possibly cover it. This is the honest man's way. The other way, the — well, let us call it the experienced man's way — is to agree

upon a line, to crash boldly in, to noisily progress for a few yards, or until you reach a convenient opening, and then to sneak up on to a stump or log from which you can command a fair sweep all about, and from this stronghold to plug every quail that the other fellow drives within range. You are up in the air a bit, but you're on his right, so he can't shoot you, while you retain the glorious privilege of bagging him any time you care to. Does he anxiously bawl to you, after your second shot betrays the fact that you haven't stirred a peg? What do you care? You bawl back that you're looking for a bird — which you are — aren't you? looking for every bird that gets up.

In a field of standing corn, the experienced man has to be more careful. Shot will go through a lot of corn, so the best he can do is first, to agree upon following a certain space between the rows, and then to keep, in yachting parlance, "eating to windward" of the dog. This will give him cross shots of his stealing, in addition to straightaways of his own flushing, and possibly an extra cross shot from his comrade when he gets on to the game! The fair way is for each to take a row about twenty yards apart and to stick to it to the other end of the growth, then take new rows and beat back. You follow the rows because it is easier going, and the view

is clearer. Shoot at every bird you see, and in emergency just ahead of where a bird has disappeared. This is quick, snappy work, but corn won't stop shot, and the expert kills bird after bird by means of this fascinating guesswork. It frequently is a profitable thing to hang a small bell to a dog's neck for work in tall corn. The birds do not mind the bell, the sound of which tells where the dog is, while the stopping of the tinkle indicates a point. Frequently in corn and other cover you find the dog stanchly pointing and yourself in a commanding position, the particular advantages of which may be lost by a single step in any direction. With a dog that does not flush to order, this is an awkward situation, for the bird will not rise unless compelled to. It may be remedied by an energetic imitation of the "Whir-r-r" of a rising bird. This is done by expelling the breath so as to cause the tongue to flutter rapidly. The sound produced will very frequently start the birds within hearing of it, and the wrinkle is worth remembering.

The methods of good shots vary. Many make it a rule to stick to the first large bevy found, which may mean an entire day's shooting within the confines of a single farm. The writer doesn't believe in such tactics. To stick to one or two bevies, and to patiently and laboriously beat them up by going over the ground again and again, is

what may be termed too narrow a system. It gets birds, 'tis true, but the mere getting of birds is only a minor part of quail-shooting. A broader plan is to outline a route at starting which will include a pleasant section of country, and to endeavor to cover it all before the light fails. This is apt to involve a series of skirmishes with perhaps half a dozen or more bevies, and truly this is the best of quail-shooting. The man who is out for pure sport and healthful, vigorous exercise need not fear a long tramp. The policy of here a little and there a little, will lead him through miles of pleasant places, will give him a broader knowledge of the country, and will keep him from that crime of crimes — exterminating a bevy. The man who hunts too closely leaves desolation in his wake. It is of him the farmer says, — "Some feller from town was out here 'tother day an' cleaned 'em all up — never left one!" Such a man is not a sportsman in the true sense of that term. The reader may rest assured that the man who kills sparingly is wise.

> "Who kills a few, then tramps away,
> Finds welcome true another day,"

is a bit of jingle which might well be committed to memory. Apropos of this point, old shooters know, and young ones must learn, that the farmer may be made the sportsman's best friend. All that

is necessary for the consummation of this satisfactory relationship is the exercise of ordinary common sense on the part of the man from town. Because a man may happen to wear rough clothes, and to be slow and quaint of speech, are no signs that he also is a fool. In point of fact, he usually is a shrewder judge of human nature than is the average city man; and the young "town feller" who thinks to "jolly" him, or in any way to overreach him, is liable to fall into woful error. The "Rube" of the comic papers is a very far-fetched individual. The city may be strange to him; but in the country he is all there, and in his own quiet way is frequently almost sorry for the greenness of his friend from town. He has his rights, he knows what they comprise, and, as a rule, all he asks of a stranger is a proper observance of them. This point he rightly insists upon.

The sportsman, therefore, being a gentleman, and realizing that he enters upon a man's land only by courtesy of the owner, will not forget the proprieties. He will carefully replace bars should he have let them down, he will close all gates behind him, he will keep his dog under proper control, and allow no scaring of stock or poultry; should he snap a fence-rail in crossing, he will promptly repair the damage, and he will not fire his gun where either the report or the charge can cause the least bit of trouble or damage. If he

be at all in doubt about his being welcome on a man's place, he will go in a manly, straightforward fashion to the house, and ask permission to shoot over the farm. The careful observance of these little matters is what secures that valuable franchise — the freedom of a good shooting district. There are "wrinkles" in this connection, too. A cheery greeting along the road costs nothing, and greases a heap of gear. A small bundle of magazines and papers, stale to you, but treasures in the back country, costs only a trifle of trouble, and will be appreciated, never fear; while the offer of a fair share of the bag at the close of the day at once stamps the maker of it as a man of the proper brand. It is a perfectly safe offer, too, for only once has the writer known it to be smilingly accepted. On that occasion the last leg of the homeward trip was by canoe, and upon disembarking the old dog kept nosing about the stern of the craft as though something good lay there. It was good — nay, rich! for it proved to be a bundle which contained the proffered birds, a nice, red, beautifully polished apple, and — a nursing-bottle, full of the sweetest milk. The only fault about the bottle was that the nose was plugged with a pellet of dough. The writer hadn't used a nursing-bottle for forty years, but he had delightful recollections. So he squeezed out the bit of dough, munched the apple, and drank the milk

(which was all right), according to his youthful teaching. Next day he solemnly returned the bottle, and described his set-to with it. A pair of very bright eyes at once examined the rubber tube, then a very red face left the room. The old farmer laughed till he cried, then asked his wife, "D'ye believe he done it?" whereupon that wise old soul wagged her gray head in an ecstasy of bliss, and cackled out: "I'll bet he done it! The joke's on darter! O dear! O dear!"

There was free shooting on that farm ever after, and the good-will of those worthy old souls helped to secure valuable privileges on adjacent lands.

The surly farmer and the seldom-met, downright mean one are different propositions, yet they can be manipulated. Once there was a mean farmer — just an ornery cuss — who never shot, didn't love birds, but was just mean on general principles. There was a big thicket at the back of his place, and it was full of quail, and late in the fall there were woodcock there too. In the nearest town was a prosperous grain merchant; his specialty was barley, and his influence had induced a few farmers, including the mean one, to forbid shooting on their lands, that he might reap the benefit. He had a confidential man whose business it was to keep tabs on the barley crop. This man was about the country a good deal, and he slightly

resembled the writer. He couldn't shoot worth sour apples, but he occasionally carried a gun. One day he tried to borrow the writer's favorite dog. A prompt refusal was the first impulse; but a brilliant idea prevented what would have been a mistake. The dog was loaned; the man had about an hour's featherless shooting; but when he returned he was enthusiastic over the hosts of birds he had seen. He had a peculiar pair of extra long leggins, and these the writer borrowed for next day, partly to get square for the loan of the dog, and partly to help out a nefarious scheme. In those days smokeless powder was a novelty; but the writer had seventy-five shells loaded with it.

When I started afield, conspicuous leggins and all, and with the identical dog, I bore no slight resemblance to the other fellow. The farmer, I knew, would be working in a certain field, so I decided to give him a friendly hail from the road, which meant a pretty safe distance. The farmer shouted back: "Hello! Back agin, hey?—all right!" Then, indeed, was there fast footing to that thicket, and a rapid fire action of the hottest kind. The new shells were discreetly silent, and the chastened, holy joy of the scheme made the gun strangely accurate.

I guessed the farmer didn't understand the intricacies of a modern shooting coat, so, with

twenty birds concealed about my person, as it were, and with a brace ostentatiously held by the legs, I passed out within plain view. In response to the expected hail of, "Git any?" I held up the two, and then smiled resignedly as the farmer roared after me: "Ye'd best put more stuff in them shells o' yourn. Ye was lucky to git airy one!" Later, the farmer chaffed the grain man about his poor showing, and — would you believe it? — that grain man actually had the nerve to try and lie out of it, and swore he had never gone back for a second trial. It is possible, too, to circumvent an overmean farmer by quietly beating his ground, and, without any shooting, driving the birds on to the next farm, and there "giving them beans."

It has been whispered that some men have a nasty habit of calling, gun in hand, on a farmer, and pretending that they are interested in the purchase of grain, or stock, or fruit — any of which is to be delivered later on to some well-known firm. The presence of the gun is explained in some simple way, — "Am no hunter, you know, but thought I might see a hawk, or crow, or squirrel, or mebbe might get a pretty bird for the wife's hat," and so on. This, occasionally, draws the coveted invitation, and the quail catch it. It's no bad wrinkle, for it is a simple matter to make a gauzy arrangement with some reputable firm,

that will gladly purchase farm products at the regular market price. When the average farmer has once opened his heart, he is your friend, and the wise sportsman will take care not to lose him.

To return to the field proper. A couple of useful wrinkles are as follows: when the birds go to brush heaps, as they often will, and the dog has pointed, it may be well to appear stupid and to appeal to the other fellow for advice. Some men love to show their superior knowledge, and your comrade may nibble at your bait, and promptly illustrate the proper method of getting a bird out of brush — which is by jumping on the pile. He gets the bird out of the brush, but you get the shot nine times out of ten.

Have the birds gone to a long, weedy, vine-tangled fence? Tact is valuable here. The windward side is the choice position, because the dog will go to leeward of the cover, and, naturally, fully three-fourths of the birds will go out the other side, which means that the man on that side will get the cream of the shooting. You will keep this point in mind and will suffer your comrade to reach the fence first. Nine men out of ten want to stick close to the dog, so when he goes over, your friend is almost certain to follow. Of course, you never tell him to go that side, — that would be unsportsmanlike, — but there is a way of stopping to fiddle with a leggin, or a shoe-

string, when he is most impatient, and so practically force him over in advance. Once over, he has to stay there, and not one green hand in one thousand will ever reason out why you get the most shots. In beating a ditch, especially a railroad ditch, the choice place is in the middle of it; for the cover is seldom very high, and the nature of the ground is all in the gun's favor, as most of the birds will follow the ditch and afford the fairest of chances. When the banks are high, one man must keep up where he can see all about, and mark down lost birds. The experienced man usually sees that the other fellow has this task.

Old hands know all about these fine points, and they are merely referred to here for the benefit of a novice, who, if he be wise, will bear them all in mind. Perhaps my present attitude somewhat resembles the tactics of the card-sharper, who goes about exposing the tricks of gamblers, yet the motive is good. Needless to say, by far the better way, in fact the only sportsmanlike way, is to insist upon a fair and square sharing of all hard work, rough beats, and choice positions. It is no credit to anybody to get the better of a game in which a raw 'un is pitted against a master hand. True sportsmanship prefers a difficult problem, and there is ever more satisfaction in winning against the odds than with them. Sharp practice is the deadly foe to sport; yet

it is astonishing how far some men will go in their eagerness to make the heaviest bag.

An instance of this may be referred to. A certain, or rather a very uncertain, man of great ability and high social position once invited the writer to join him for a day's quail-shooting. He furnished the trap, dog, and lunch, and during the drive out and three-fourths of the shooting he was as pleasant a host as man could desire. The sport proved excellent and by mid-afternoon the bag was a heavy one, the writer having two or three birds the better of it. In following the game a series of thickets was entered, a peculiarity of the growth being that, while very dense and baffling from about waist-high upward, it was comparatively open below, as though the spot had been at one time under water.

While the guns were some distance apart, an unexpected grouse roared up directly in front of the writer. The shot was an extremely difficult one, — a guess through the leaves, — yet there was that peculiar feeling which tells a man when he is exactly right. It was followed by a distant thump on the ground and a somewhat prolonged buzzing of wings. This induced the writer to squat down and peer away through an opening below the roof-like cover. He saw the wings of the grouse as it struggled, and in a moment a boot followed by a hand came into view. The

hand picked up the bird, and a moment later a shot rang out, followed by a cry of, "I got him!"

It was a startling revelation, for there was no mistaking act or motive. Nothing was said on either side, but one brain did a deal of thinking. At the end of what otherwise would have been a perfect day, the sole retort was the presentation of the entire bag with the remark, "You value them more than most men, and no doubt can find plenty of use for them." That ended the matter, but never again did the man propose a joint debate of the game question. He must have guessed, for he couldn't see. The chances are that he later thought that one grouse rather a high-priced fowl. It was a mighty fine bird, too!

NEAR THE END OF THE SEASON

This is the time beloved of the skilled and vigorous quail-shooter. The birds are at their best — strong, full-feathered, and educated in the hard school of experience. They go to cover like so many cannon-balls, to be stopped only by the man whose eyes and hands work in the most perfect unison. There is a tang to the air which makes a fellow feel like stepping off five miles an hour, while a dog can work hard all day and keep his tongue in his mouth. Scent, as a rule, is of the best; the leaves are down, so that what a month before was baffling cover is now only suf-

ficiently difficult to thoroughly test one's skill. The sole fault of the season is that days are short —all too short, when men and dogs are full of "ginger" and "go."

At the first flush, birds may be trusted to whizz away to the worst cover in the neighborhood, for they have settled upon their winter quarters — the best shelter, hence the hardest cover to shoot in. But what of that? A clean kill now is more gratifying than were three of the easier time, and the birds are apt to lie very close after being scattered. Every now and then there comes a clear, still, warm day, when woods and thicket are flooded with light. This is the day of days. The magic of it makes a fellow feel like sparring a few rounds, running a race, mixing in a promiscuous scuffle, or just yelling in sheer exuberance of animal spirits. If after a two or three mile sharp walk as a pipe-opener he doesn't shoot in his best form, — and he'll have need to, — he'd best get him to a hennery, for domesticity is what he needs.

The gun must be swung farther ahead now, and woe unto the man who stops that smooth swing as he presses the trigger. It is better to be too far ahead than one inch too far back. A single pellet forward of the wings may prove a clean kill, while a number of pellets too far back may result in a lost bird left to die miserably.

So heave *ahead*, my hearties, a good foot or more, according to distance, for round, humming wings are wondrous strong these braw, clear days. And forget not the calling. Allow them a bit more time than sufficed for the youngsters, and they will respond, as in salad days.

Is the air deathly still and gray with the coming snow? Then your work is cut out for you. They know, as do all wild things, when the white wolf of the North is running a trail to the southward. Though they be of that season's hatch, they instinctively feel the coming change, and they huddle close where the strange, cold, white feathers shall not touch them. Then the dog of the magic nose and the developed brain is the chap to find them. There will be practically no foot-scent. He must catch it in the air and draw straight and truly; so when you see his grand head rising higher and higher, and the sensitive nose apparently reaching and feeling for something, clear for action, there will be music in a minute.

After the snow has come the cover appears to open and dwindle like magic. One can see almost anywhere, and the problem is now simplified to a straight argument of skill *versus* speed. The birds now hang about thickets, brush heaps, and what rank weeds may be left standing, and they are apt to cling to the rail-

roads, where they are sure of gravel and apt to find grain which has fallen from passing cars. It may be well, too, if close attention be paid to fields where the corn has been left in shocks. Every bird in the neighborhood will know all about that corn.

After a heavy fall of snow followed by high winds, there are sure to be big drifts about the fences. Sometimes flushed birds will make for a drift which covers some favorite spot, and will dart head foremost into the snow. This is a common trick with ptarmigan and ruffed grouse; but the writer does not recall having seen it mentioned in connection with quail. That they will so dive into snow is a fact, and a trick which frequently baffles the best of dogs. Therefore, when a bird has been truly marked down at a drift, and the dog fails to locate it, carefully scan the snow, and possibly a small, round hole may be there to explain the seeming mystery. The writer has found those holes, cleanly cut and without a single mark to betray the makers of them, and he has inserted a hand, and either caught or scared the seven senses out of a warm, feathery thing, which gave a sudden convulsive start, then burst through the snow roof like a miniature torpedo.

During snow time it is possible to have sport without the aid of a dog. The writer has en-

joyed it many a time, when, for some reason, a dog was not available. Indeed, he has gone so far as to purposely leave the dog at home. To the man who loves the woods there is a peculiar charm about this still hunting, for such it truly is. The warm moccasins make not a sound, while one bends to his reading of the great white page — the register of Nature's snug hostelry.

The little people, furred and feathered, write firmly and plainly. They do not understand the joys of late hours, tobacco, and hard liquor, so the signature of each is beautifully distinct, and anything else that may be added is unquestionably true — evidently they are ignorant of a number of popular professions, *notably* journalism. There, then, is the record for the still hunter to read.

To find the trim footprints of a bevy, to read their age at a glance, and, when the sign warrants, to steal after them upon silent feet as the lynx steals upon the northern hare, is no bad fun. There is a tenseness about the situation, as one approaches a probable flush, which, to say the least, is exhilarating. It is strange how the hands will grip the gun, and how the breath will check, should a dry leaf rustle, or a harmless handful of snow fall with a muffled "prup." A glance of reddish brown where an unsuspected squirrel darts across an opening, will make the gun

THE NATIONAL GAME-BIRD

(Bob-white)

fairly leap to shoulder. And then — at last — most likely when you are a-straddle of a snowy log, or cautiously raising the rear foot — "Burr-r-r!"

Did you get one? Then indeed you are a good 'un! What! *Two*, did you say? Then MASTER — see! — I grovel at thy feet — snow and all! Thy humble servant will meekly follow ten paces to the rear, for thou art indeed "that wizard of woodlands, foreknowing their deep-hidden secrets," of whom the poet sang.

THE ENEMIES OF THE QUAIL

Next to man, the deadliest foes of the quail are, — crusted snow, extreme cold, hawks, and domestic cats, which have taken to foraging in the covers. There are other destroyers, such as foxes and owls; but careful observation has failed to prove very serious charges against them, the chief destroyers unquestionably being the four first mentioned. It is unfortunate that the ravages by crust and cold cannot well be prevented. The quail's habit of huddling under brush piles and other shelter leaves it peculiarly liable to be snowed under, which, with certain weather conditions, may mean the destruction of nine-tenths of the birds in a given district. The worst possible thing for a quail country is an unusually heavy snow late in the winter, followed by a mixture of rain and sleet, suddenly changing to bitter

cold. This is not infrequent, and the first sign of it is enough to give a sportsman a dose of the dismals. The birds know when the snow is coming and they creep under the brush, intending to remain there until the weather has cleared. They know nothing about the peril, as they calmly submit to being covered by a foot or more of snow, which for the time only helps to make the quarters more comfortable. Then the rain comes and wets the surface all about, then the sleet stiffens it, and by its drumming warns the birds below not to stir for a while; lastly, the wind suddenly shifts to the north, the cold becomes intense, and every foot of damp snow promptly hardens into solid ice, perhaps capable of sustaining a man's weight. The quail are now imprisoned beneath a dome of crystal, which may endure for days. If it does, the mournful sportsman scouting after the snow has gone overturns a heap and finds — that which makes him curse the elements thoroughly and bitterly, for right well he knows how long it may take to repair the damage.

The quail which actually are frozen, victims of extreme cold alone, are comparatively few. So long as they can obtain a proper amount of food, they are very hardy. "A quail with a full crop never freezes," is an old saying with a deal of truth in it. The last severe spell of a winter is apt to be the most deadly, because then the birds are

sure to be in more or less poor condition. By that time the various growths have been closely gleaned, what little food there may be being frosted and deprived of most of its nourishing quality. If the winter prove unusually severe, with much deep snow, food should be placed where the birds can get it without having to go too far from their favorite shelter. Corn, wheat, and buckwheat are the best foods, and a few bushels of one or other of these, placed behind some form of shelter where, as the tracks indicate, the quail frequent, will do much to help birds through that trying period near the end of the winter. The trouble of attending to this will be richly repaid, for it must be remembered that a very few pairs of birds will stock a large farm to its full capacity.

Two destroyers which have attained an unenviable reputation are Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperi*), and the sharp-shinned hawk (*A. velox*). These two are about the only hawks which do serious damage. The proper justice for them weighs about an ounce and one-eighth, and should be administered at every opportunity. When birds are regularly fed, one or other of these rascals is almost certain to find it out and hang about the nearest cover. For this reason it is a good plan to carry a gun and a few heavily loaded shells whenever one goes to put out more food or to learn how the quail are faring.

When a cat takes to ranging the covers, it soon becomes a persistent destroyer, the habits of quail making them easy prey. An excellent course is to shoot every cat found beyond its proper range of the barnyard and the garden. It may be as well to carefully conceal the bodies, for many folk who own cats do not realize what bad brutes their pets may be; and besides, as we all know, "What the eyes don't see, the heart don't sorrow for," as it is popularly expressed. Foxes, great horned owls, and other foes need not be dwelt upon, for farmers and sportsmen alike will shoot them at every opportunity.

Protectors, however, should not fall into error where some of the birds of prey are concerned. The marsh-hawk, the long-winged fellow with the white patch on his rump, seen tacking over marshes, does more good than harm, as his favorite prey is the destructive short-tailed field-mouse. The red-tailed hawk will pounce upon fowls, but seldom molests game. He earns a right to live by destroying certain mischief workers. The fine, red-shouldered hawk chiefly confines himself to a diet of mice, snakes, and grasshoppers. The beautiful little sparrow-hawk, seen poised in air, or perched upon a telegraph pole or a dead stub, feeds upon grasshoppers, crickets, and other insects during warm weather, while in winter his regular diet is mice. Need-

less to say, he should not be killed for any purpose.

A DAY OVER DOGS

You've seen an old cart-horse — one of the sort with spavins, and splints, and grease-heel, and poll-evil, and a few little things like that — released in pasture? You've seen his ponderous joy as he grasped the fact that for a time at least he was free from galling straps; you've seen him put his tail up and snort, then take a good, grunty old roll, and wind up with a stiff-jointed trot around and a few extra fool-capers on the side? Well, I felt just that way.

All one night I had whirled westward, sleeping like a winter bear, content with my single dream that I was flying farther and farther from the deep city cañons of Gotham. Then a black hand pawed at me, and a voice said: "Git up, Boss, — you done got but ten minutes!"

He was right, as porters always are, and, as I hurried through dressing, an occasional peep through the window detected thickets and bits of woodland which were strangely familiar. There were the old grounds, now, so the letter had said, carrying a grand crop of quail, and here I was almost ready and almost arrived. A few minutes later, that best of fellows, whom I shall call "Doc," was leading the way to his snug residence, and telling me all about it. The dogs

were in fine fettle, everything was ready, and we would shoot the following day.

Before turning in, Doc let his brace of setters into the house. They were handsome, medium-sized bitches of Llewellyn-Laverack blood, black-and-white, and named respectively Madge and Joss. I had shot over Madge a few days the previous season, and we were curious to know if she would remember me. The brace crouched on a rug, and we sat and watched them. Presently Madge became restless and sniffed a few times in my direction; then she crawled to me and rooted her nose under my hand, while her tail beat a soft tattoo of welcome. "By George! she remembers you," exclaimed Doc; and as I looked into her eager, pleading brown eyes, I knew that she did. Those eyes were talking as only a good dog's eyes can, but she had not yet heard me speak. Finally I patted her and said, "Good old Madgie." In an instant she was up and capering about like a mad thing, which performance so affected Joss that she cut a few capers out of sympathy. They made such a row that we had to send them away.

Doc routed me out at six o'clock in some sort of fog which he termed morning, and presently we were in the trap, with the dogs snuggled under the seat. The nag was a stepper, the road was good, and we rattled along famously. Farms,

forest, and thickets slipped behind in rapid succession, each recalling some red-letter or disappointing experience, for we had shot over that country for years. The district we traversed was perhaps not strictly picturesque; yet seen in the early sunlight it seemed to me to be positively beautiful. Here stretched broad fields of bleaching corn or stubble, bordered with crimson sumach, and backed by smoky thicket; next, a long pasture, deep green with late fall grass, and spangled with scattered points of color where the painted leaves had settled; then a big woodland aflame with the crimson and gold of maples, the purple and bronze of oaks, and yellows of nut trees.

Nine miles from the starting-point we reached a snug farm-house. A boy took the horse, and in brief time we had got into skeleton coats, put guns together, and were ready for business. The farmer, a good, ruddy-faced old soul, too old for more sport, had eyed me for some time in a doubtful sort of way. I had known him years before; but my name this time had failed to rouse his memory. Just for fun I whistled, "*Ka-loi-hee! ka-loi-hee!*" He at once turned and said: "That's pretty good. I knowed a chap though that could beat it. Years ago he used to hunt round here. He was a regular loafer — a long, lean, slab-sided cuss, always a-foolin' with birds, an' no good fur

nothin' but shootin'. But he could call quail. I've seen him call 'em right to him."

"What came of him?" asked Doc.

"I reckon he died about ten year ago. He was a consumptive, anyhow, and no good on earth," added the old man; "but he could call quail better 'n any man livin'."

"What was his name?" persisted Doc.

"Wa-al, I sorter forget his actool name, but you ought to know it. His dad was parson to the brick church in town, nigh on to fifty year, I reckon."

Doc was choking with laughter when I turned on our friend and said: "See here, you old snoozer, what do you mean by calling me a consumptive loafer? I'll take a fall out of you first thing you know!"

He boggled his eyes and gasped like a freshly landed bass; then he dived for me, and we had fun. "Durn you," he said, "what a whalin' big cuss you've growed. But I'm mighty glad to see you, loafer or no loafer," and the old cock laughed till his gills turned blue. Before we got away he begged us to see his neighbor. He said, "Why, we were talkin' 'bout you only last week, when we scart up some birds, and if you'll only fool old Tom like you fooled me, I'll kill a fat chicken agin supper time."

The cat found a chicken's head in the yard that afternoon.

The first field, a big stubble, held no birds, but it proved the superb quality of the dogs. They went off at the word and beat it out like field-trial winners, working independently, quartering beautifully, and maintaining an astonishing rate of speed. Once Madge whirled and stopped for a second on a lark; but brief as her halt was, Joss had time to back her fifty yards away. Doc's face fairly shone as he grunted at me, "Great team — eh?" They were good beyond question, and the second field showed them to even better advantage. The game little ladies started fast and kept warming the pace, till they were racing before they had cut out half their ground. To and fro they swept in beautiful long tacks, sailing along with smooth, flawless action, which hinted of plenty of staying power. Heads carried high and sterns ceaselessly whipping flanks gave to their work that style and finish so pleasing to the eye of a sportsman. No order was given, for none was required. At intervals Doc whistled sharply to turn one or other; with this exception they worked as their bird sense prompted. We followed as leisurely as their speed would allow, and we did not have to walk far.

Madge's white nose rose higher and tested the breeze for a moment, then she went galloping dead to windward. No tacking, no ground-scent, no roading: just a rapid run up the wind, and

a stop so sudden that in one bound she was at speed, and at its finish she was rigid.

"Oh, you little beauty!" was my thought, as Doc tersely inquired, "How's that?"

From the boundary fence came Joss, cracking on more sail every stride, for a fringe of weeds hid Madge from her, and she seemed to fear she had been outfooted. As she swung around the weeds, her eye caught the white banner of a tail marking her rival's position, and she propped so suddenly that she almost toppled over. Again Doc queried, "How's that?" and again I said nothing, but feasted my eyes on the faultless picture they made.

We watched them for some minutes, and I would have given a fat price for the scene on canvas. The mass of glowing foliage in the background, the smoky distance, the deep crimson of the sumachs against the grays of the lichened fence, the bronzy briers and partly faded small growths of the foreground, and the two black-and-white forms, set and straining with controlled excitement and intensity of purpose, might well have formed an illustration of the best there is in American sport.

"Let's flush," said Doc, and we moved forward. Then it seemed as though a shell exploded in the weeds, and a storm of feathered missiles went whizzing toward the wood. The two guns

sounded as one; then Doc's second barrel rang out, and a puff of feathers told that his hand was in. I always shoot with both eyes open, and the eye that had not been too intent on the birds had detected a swiftly leaping shape which darted into the grass. Swinging round, I held low and well ahead of the shaking grass.

"What's that — rabbit?" asked Doc.

"What's that" answered for itself. We heard a wrathful sputtering, like a man's sweet, low talk when he unexpectedly finds something hard in a dark room, and then a voice — such a voice! — cried unto heaven, "*Mee — yow-r-r — ow-r! Mee-yow-r-r!*"

We grinned at each other as I said, "Keep the dogs down till I finish that devil." It was a big, hard-looking Thomas, and the number nine had raked him well forward. He was growling and swearing savagely, and he made a bounce at me. Old foot-ball training helped there. The right boot met him fairly, and he sailed over a clump of bushes.

"Wonderful what a trifle of 'number nine' can do," sagely remarked Doc.

"Shot or boot?" I retorted.

"Oh, the second barrel, by all means; you're deadliest with it!" snapped Doc, grinning like a fiend.

The dogs soon found the dead birds and, after

a reasonable wait, we followed the bevy into the cover.

"I didn't see her," I remarked; "couldn't make her out. Did you get her?"

"No, both cocks here. So you still stick to the old lady theory?"

"Certainly I do; I'll get her next time, but I'd rather had her now."

The ground was strewn with logs and small brush piles, and Madge and Joss promptly showed that they knew a thing or two. The dashing, high-headed work of the open changed to a fast but cautious skirmishing — a deadly method in such ground.

After a period of uncertain progress, Doc asked, "Where's Joss?" Then he whistled sharply, but no Joss appeared. We knew what was up, and at length descried a white point above a distant log. Madge bore off toward it, but before reaching the log she stiffened into a showy point beside a lot of brush. A bird flushed, and Doc killed, Madge still holding the point. A kick at the brush flushed another, which fell to me. After Madge had located the dead, she caught sight of her mate, and promptly backed.

Moving on to flush, we discovered Joss gamely proving her stanchness. She had stopped while in the act of drawing across a big log, and was standing almost on her head, her hind feet high

upon the log. In spite of the long wait, the flush and shooting so near at hand, she had not moved a hair.

There was fun a-plenty. We ordered Joss on; but the instant she had got into a more comfortable position, she set herself and refused to budge. I kicked a bit of brush, and right from under my feet went a bird. Doc stopped it, then he kicked the brush and a brace whizzed forth — one of them probably is whizzing yet. A kick at a branch sent a jaunty wee hen whirring to a medicated doom, then two white-throats boomed away together, and I made a clean double.

"Confound you — you always get the best of it!" exclaimed Doc. His voice started another, and I snapped it and did some soulful chuckling. But the joy was short-lived, for two puffs of smoke floated away, and Doc put in another shell. We had fired so nearly together that neither had heard the other's gun.

The dogs moved about a bit, but soon stiffened again, evidently on more birds in the pile. Kicking failed to start them, so I climbed upon the pile and set it all swaying. Then, with a resounding whirr, the remainder of the bevy darted out. Doc stopped a brace.

This ended the excitement, so a halt was called for lunch and a pipe. The dogs curled up together and took their bread in turn. The tips of the

white sterns were dyed pink from whipping rough brush, and dark welts along silken flanks told that it had not been all fun. We examined their feet and removed every burr from their coats. When the word was given, they sprang to their work as though they had not run a yard that day.

We tramped across country for an hour before they again made game, but they never slackened speed, beating every field as prettily as the first. Where a wheat-stubble joined a sea of standing corn, Madge suddenly halted. Upon our turning to see Joss back from the open, we discovered that amiable lady rapidly roading along a furrow. In a moment she too halted, and there were two bevies, or one dog was on foot-scent. Doc's secret preference showed itself. He at once started for Joss, remarking, "They've run out of the corn to feed, come on!"

I looked at Madge. She was steady as a rock, and I hated to slight the creature that had carried a memory of me for a year. I walked to her, past her, turned and looked at her and said, "Madgie, old girl, you're wrong this time, I'm afraid." The stiffened stern waved slightly, the quivering ears dropped a trifle, then rose again, and the grand eyes rolled toward me with an expression which said as plainly as words: "If I'm wrong, I don't know it; I'm doing my best to please you." I turned aside, made one step —

two steps; then something grazed a leggin, and she stiffened beside my foot. I reached down and patted her. To the hand she felt hard as a board, and the tense muscles twitched curiously. Once more I moved ahead, turned, and said, "Madgie, where are —"

"Burr—r-r-r-urr!"

Not a bevy, but a pack of about forty birds roared up ten yards away and started for the standing corn. I rattled in both barrels, and three birds fell. Like an echo came two shots from Doc, followed by a warning cry. I hurried a shell into the right barrel and turned in time for a chance at a second bevy as it reached the corn. A bird fell, and I saw Doc gather a brace.

There were two hours of daylight left, and there were sixty or more quail in the corn. A Joshua would have been worth ten dollars an hour, in advance. The stalks towered above our heads, and the ground was a bit too clean for birds to lie very close; but the sport lost no spice on that account.

Up and down the rows we tramped abreast, getting shots every few minutes and missing now and then. Often we could not see the birds when they rose, but many a beautiful bit of dog work and brilliant kill rewarded us. The birds were scattered all over the place, and only the approach of dusk prevented the making of a tre-

mendous bag. Shadows stole from the woods and blurred the rows of corn till buzzing wings might sound with impunity anywhere. Doc shouted, "Want to go through once more?" I yelled back, "Too dark!"

How we suddenly discovered that we were very weary; how we tramped two miles too far trying to locate our farmer and his chicken; how Madge jogged contentedly at heel while Joss persisted in ranging through the darkness; how we finally gathered in the chicken; how we almost fell asleep during the long ride home, need not be dwelt upon.

Doc's better half was patiently waiting. She scanned the tired faces and bulging coats, and knew things had gone well that day. Before letting the dogs go to feed, she dropped on her knees between them, and with an arm about the neck of each, she plumped out the awful question, "Which do you think is the best?" I was in a mighty tight place, and I knew it. Fate, however, was kind, for I happened to notice the arm about Madge tightening in a way that was, to say the least, suggestive. To be candid, my chief impression was that those dogs were exceptionally fortunate brutes; but that was not the question. Risking a random shot, I ventured, "Well, if Doc will put Madge in the coming field trials, I'll remain to see that running."

It was a clean kill. With proud triumph she informed her lord and master that I was the best judge of dogs that had ever lived.

Doc's eyes twinkled mischievously as he drawled: "Won't you ever learn to weigh his words? Joss can hang her — and he knows it."

Doc was right.

THE FLORIDA BOB-WHITE

(*C. v. floridanus*)

This bird almost might be termed the bantam of the common Bob-white. Scientific authorities have agreed to consider it a separate race; but to the eye of the average sportsman it is merely an undersized individual of the northern species. The important differences are the smaller size and the darker color throughout. The race is confined to Florida, and may be found upon all suitable ground within the borders of the state. Its habits differ but slightly, if at all, from those of *C. virginianus*. Its favorite haunts are cultivated grounds bordered by the natural cover. The mating season extends, according to locality, from about the end of February to April. The nest is carefully concealed, perhaps under a palmetto, or in rank grass, or weeds. The eggs closely resemble those of the northern bird, but the average number is considerably less, it being usually between ten and

fifteen. As a rule two broods are raised in a season. The principal food embraces a variety of seeds and berries. The various calls, the flight, habits of feeding and roosting time, are identical with those of *C. virginianus*, and the Florida bird behaves as well before dogs and affords as good sport as the other.

As many Northerners have learned, Florida Bob-white shooting is not what it used to be. The game, small fellows have many busy foes, including snakes and beasts and birds of prey. These attack old and young, and the eggs; but the worst enemy is the prowling pot-hunter, black and white, who is apt to also be a trapper. This kind of man knows no mercy, and as the birds fall easy victims to the simplest form of snare and traps, great numbers are annually destroyed by such illegal methods. In addition to these ravages, there is a vast amount of shooting done by sportsmen from the North, who, being on holiday, naturally keep their guns as busy as possible. Better enforced game laws, and a persistent pursuit of all law breakers and the natural enemies of Bob-white, no doubt will in time restore the proper head of birds. More than once, to the writer's personal knowledge, have these southern birds been brought north, to restock depleted covers. Under the new climatic and food conditions the type is speedily lost, and it is to be pre-

sumed the strangers mate freely with native birds. This I have not seen proved by the only true test, *i.e.* breeding in confinement; but in at least two instances males from Florida, which were turned loose with northern bred females, appeared to mate and breed within a field or so of the point of liberation. Unfortunately, only the eye could be used for verification, which is none too trustworthy a method; but as there is no great reason for doubt, the eye probably was correct.

THE TEXAN BOB-WHITE

(*C. v. texanus*)

Only a trifle smaller than *C. virginianus*, this race is distinguished by its lighter color, and, in the majority of males, by a tinge of cinnamon beneath the black of the throat. To the eye, the entire plumage presents a somewhat bleached appearance, which in both sexes amounts to a decided grayness. The female has a fainter cinnamon mark, while the buff of throat and stripe has a faded look, quite unlike the warmer tone of her northern sister. The other trifling variations could hardly be detected by unscientific eyes except by a careful comparison of specimens of the two races side by side. The general habits and calls of this race are the same as those of *C. virginianus;* but, possibly owing to a lack of "education," the bird is tamer, and only in much

disturbed districts does it ever show any of the resourcefulness frequently so puzzling to the pursuer of the Bob-white of the North. Its range extends over western and southern Texas, and in Mexico from Guadalajara to Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon.

It is a common bird of the prairies and the Rio Grande valley, but it is seldom if ever found at a greater elevation than two thousand feet. Its food consists of grain, the seeds of grasses and wild growths, berries, and insects. When flushed, it speeds away to the thickest available cover, where it lies very close. The nest in the majority of cases is built in a clump of close growing grass, and, as frequently is the case in the North, it is apt to be domed over by interwoven herbage. The number of eggs laid by one bird varies between twelve and fifteen; when a greater number are found, it is more than probable that two hens have deposited them. In all sporting qualifications this bird is worthy of pursuit, especially in a region where there has been a fair amount of shooting.

In addition to the usual enemies, human, furred, and feathered, the Texan Bob-white has a deadly foe in the rattlesnake, which is common throughout its haunts. The terrestrial habit of the game leaves it peculiarly open to attack by the coiled peril, and it is no uncommon thing to find a snake

showing from one to three or four conspicuous swellings, which upon cutting the destroyer open prove to be caused by dead quail.

THE MASKED BOB-WHITE

(*C. ridgwayi*)

Adult Male— Head, black mixed with chestnut on top; occiput, nearly all chestnut; hind neck, chestnut with a few white spots. Upper part of back, chestnut slightly mottled with black, rest of upper parts and wings closely barred with black and buff; central tail feathers like the back, remainder bluish gray, with slight buff mottlings near the tips. White line over the eye; sides of face and throat, jet black; rest of under parts, uniform cinnamon rufous; bill, black, legs and feet, pale brown. Total length, 8½ inches; wing, 4½; tail, 2¾; tarsus, 1⅛; bill, ½. Geographical distribution — southern Arizona to Sonora, Mexico.

The female closely resembles the female of the Texan quail, but is paler, especially on the upper parts, including the wings. The under parts show trifling differences. The cinnamon band is somewhat narrower and paler; the buff of the throat is paler; but the bars on upper breast and abdomen are darker and more sharply defined. There is no noticeable difference in the dimensions of the male and female. The conspicuous black mask gives to this bird a most singular appearance, yet it is exceedingly handsome. When seen in full sunlight the breast of the male glows with a rich red which increases the apparant plumpness of a very rounded model.

It is not so abundant as its relatives. In Arizona, it appears to be confined to a strip of territory about thirty miles wide and a hundred miles in length. It is found in the valley, on the table-lands, and at a considerable elevation, the highest recorded being six thousand feet in the Huachuca Mountains. The call of the male is the familiar "Bob-white," but the rallying call after a bevy has been scattered shows a marked variation, it sounding like *Hoo-we.* The nest and eggs closely resemble those of the northern species. The food consists of insects, seeds in variety, and the foliage of certain growths. To judge from its fondness for elevations, this bird should be hardy and worthy of introduction in portions of our western wilderness where the climatic conditions are not too severe. Were the species once well established at such points, birds bred in the new country might safely be taken farther north, and the process repeated until perhaps at last we should have a beautiful, and what should prove a valuable, addition to the game list of the Northern states. Some of those zealous sportsmen who have spent and frequently wasted money in attempts to introduce European game might perhaps, with happier results, turn their attention to the masked Bob-white.

THE PARTRIDGES

Subfamily — *Odontophorinæ*. Genus, *Oreortyx* (literally mountain quail). Head with long, slender crest of two feathers, upright, or inclined backward. Mountain dwellers. Plumage very beautiful with sharply contrasting markings. The genus embraces one species and two subspecies, viz.: *O. pictus*, the mountain partridge; *O. p. plumiferus*, the plumed partridge; and *O. p. confinis*, the San Pedro partridge.

Genus *Callipepla*, crest full and short. *C. squamata*, the scaled partridge, and *C. s. castaneigastra*, the chestnut-bellied scaled partridge.

Genus *Lophortyx*, crest of several overlapping feathers, recurved, upright, widening from base to tip, distinct from crown feathers. *L. californicus*, the California partridge; *L. c. vallicola*, the valley partridge; and *L. gambelli*, Gambel's partridge.

Genus *Cyrtonyx*, crest full, soft, depressed. Species, *C. montezuma*, the Massena partridge.

THE MOUNTAIN PARTRIDGE

(*Oreortyx pictus*)

Adult male — Top of head, sides of neck and breast, plumbeous; entire upper parts, upper tail-coverts and wings, deep olive-brown, sometimes tinged with rufous; crest of lengthened straight feathers, black; chin, white; entire throat, rich chestnut, bordered on the sides with black, and separated from the bluish neck by a conspicuous white line; a white spot behind the eye; flanks, deep chestnut, broadly barred with black and white; middle of belly, white; under tail-coverts, black, the feathers showing a central line of deep chestnut; tail, olive-brown, mottled with black; inner edges of tertials broadly marked with ochraceous white; bill, black. Total length about 10 inches, wing, $5\frac{3}{8}$; tail, $3\frac{1}{2}$; tarsus, $1\frac{3}{8}$; bill, $\frac{5}{8}$. The adult female closely resembles the male, the only noticeable difference being a somewhat shorter crest. Range, from the Bay of San Francisco, California, through Oregon and Washington. Introduced on Vancouver Island.

This comparatively large and exceedingly handsome species is not highly esteemed by sportsmen in general, owing to its true value not being well understood. In certain portions of California, and notably in the Willamette Valley, Oregon, when abundant it affords capital sport, while upon the table it is a delicacy not to be forgotten. As a rule, one, or at most two, broods are found on a favorite ground, the birds seldom, if ever, flocking like some of their relatives. *O. pictus* prefers moist districts and a generous rainfall. It is a runner, and in comparison with Bob-white, by no means so satisfactory a bird for dogs to work on. After the first flush the covey is apt to scatter widely and the beating up of single birds is a slow and frequently a wearying task. On the wing, its size and moderate speed render it a rather easy mark.

The call of the male is suggestive of the crowing of a young bantam, while the rallying cry of scattered birds is not unlike the yelping of young wild turkeys. The female is a watchful mother, leading and calling her brood like a bantam hen, and the young are shy, alert things, hiding promptly and as closely as young Bob-whites when the alarm note is sounded. The nest is a grass-lined depression in the ground, well hidden under some convenient shelter, frequently a log or bush or a clump of grass. The eggs vary in

color from pale to rich buff, without spots. The food of this species consists of various seeds and insects, occasionally varied with grain. The bird, however, is too shy and retiring in habit to ever make itself at home on cultivated ground.

THE PLUMED PARTRIDGE

(*Oreortyx pictus plumiferus*)

To the ordinary observer this bird is exactly like *O. pictus*, but the habits vary. Strangely enough, the mountain partridge is less a frequenter of high altitudes than this species, which is frequently found at an elevation of between eight and ten thousand feet. Its range includes both sides of the Sierra Nevada, eastern Oregon, and to the Panamint Mountains and Mount Magruder, Nevada; in California, from San Francisco Bay to the Argus Mountains. It prefers the drier country away from the coast. It, too, is a runner, and an unsatisfactory object of pursuit. The nest, eggs, young, habits during the breeding season, and food are identical with those of the preceding species; in fact, the one marked difference lies in the preference of *O. p. plumiferus* for higher ground. To the eye, the female is distinguishable by her shorter crest.

THE SAN PEDRO PARTRIDGE

(*O. p. confinis*)

This bird was found by Mr. Anthony in the San Pedro Mountains of Lower California, to which range it is confined, and abundant at six to ten thousand feet above sea level; during winter it descends to lower ground. Only trifling variations in color distinguish it from *O. p. plumiferus.* The eggs are pure creamy white.

THE SCALED PARTRIDGE

(*Callipepla squamata*)

Adult— Head, varying from brown to brownish gray; tip of crest, white; throat, pale buff; hind neck, upper parts of back and breast, bluish gray, each feather beautifully bordered with black, the marks following a scalelike arrangement; scapulars, wings, lower back, and rump, pale brown; upper tail-coverts and tail, bluish gray; flanks, bluish gray, streaked with white; rest of lower parts, pale buff, feathers margined with deep brown; bill, black. Total length, 9½ inches; wing, 5; tail, 4¼; tarsus, 1⅜. In plumage the sexes are exactly alike. Range. western Texas New Mexico, southern Arizona, Valley of Mexico.

This beautiful bird, also known as "blue quail," "white topknot," "white-crested quail," and "cactus-quail," is a frequenter of the mesas and a lover of dry plateaus, where vegetation is sparse and water not to be found. Here, amid sun-baked cactus, yuccas, and thinly dispersed thorny growths, it finds congenial haunts. Needless to say, such

ground is no place for good dogs, and even if the canines could work, the habits of the scaled partridge would not recommend it to sportsmen. It is an inveterate runner, a shy, wary creature, ever ready to go sprinting away from the first suggestion of danger, and only taking wing when surprised or closely pressed. When flushed, its sole idea appears to be to get to earth again as speedily as may be and to resume its tireless trotting. It is found at an altitude of six to seven thousand feet, and descends to the lowlands during severe weather, but never appears to seek cover. Its food consists of seeds, berries, buds, leaves, and insects, though grain is greedily devoured if opportunity offers. Its alarm note is a peculiar, low, hollow-sounding, and apparently somewhat ventriloquial effort.

The pairs begin nesting in May, and two, and sometimes three, broods are hatched during a season. The nest is placed upon the ground under any convenient shelter; the eggs are light buff, freckled with brownish spots, and the average number about a dozen.

Were it not for its habit of running, this bird might have proved a valuable addition to the game list of the country, instead of being an abomination to the sportsman, and a menace to the subsequent usefulness of any dog unfortunate enough to be sent after it.

THE CHESTNUT-BELLIED SCALED PARTRIDGE
(*C. s. castaneigastra*)

This is a subspecies of the preceding, distinguished by a more or less extensive patch of chestnut on the belly. With this exception, its habits, color, and markings so closely resemble the other that further references are unnecessary. It is found in the lower Rio Grande Valley, in Texas, and in eastern Mexico. From the sporting point of view, it has little to recommend it.

THE CALIFORNIA PARTRIDGE
(*Lophortyx californicus*)

Adult male — Forehead, buff; shafts of feathers, black; head, dark chestnut, bordered anteriorly and on sides with black, followed by a line of pure white; line from bill to eye, white; chin and throat, jet-black, bordered all round from behind the eye with white, margined with black; back of neck and upper part of back, blue, the feathers margined with black and a minute bluish white spot at tip; entire upper parts, deep smoke-brown; inner edge of tertials, buff, forming two conspicuous lines; primaries, dark brown; breast, deep blue; belly, deep buff, the feathers margined with black; flanks, smoke-brown, streaked with white; abdomen, dark chestnut, the feathers with black margins; vent and under tail-coverts deep buff, with broad central streaks of dark brown; bill, black; crest, black, very narrow at base, widening out and curving forward at the tip; all the feathers (about six) enclosed between the webs of the anterior plume. Total length of bird, 10 inches; wing, $4\frac{1}{2}$; tail, 4; tarsus, $1\frac{1}{4}$; bill, $\frac{1}{2}$. The female has a shorter, chestnut-brown crest; head, smoky gray, without white or black markings; no chestnut patch on abdomen, and the scaly markings less pronounced. Colors throughout more subdued. Range, California coast region, as far north as Monterey. Introduced into Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia.

This handsome and sprightly species, while a persistent runner, has been compelled to furnish much excellent sport. It is a haunter of cañons, brushy slopes, and fields, and its pursuit may be best described as continued and rapid skirmishing by the sportsman afoot. Dogs are practically useless for work on this aggravating bird. I have never seen it lie to a point — that is, after the manner of Bob-white. In certain cover, scattered birds occasionally do so, but a safe rule for the man who owns a good dog is to leave that dog at home when the quarry is the California partridge.

In spite of many glowing descriptions of the delights of skirmishing behind these nimble-footed small rascals, I am firmly convinced that they are greatly overdrawn, as I am that on foot, on the wing, and on the board, *L. californicus* is unworthy of mention in comparison with Bob-white. I am ready to admit that the bustling of these birds from clump to clump is jolly good fun; that the chase, for that is what it amounts to, has a charm peculiar to itself; that the shooting of the bird is fairly difficult, under the conditions, — but beyond that I will not go. To rank this partridge, as some have, with Bob-white, is an absurdity — indeed, any comparison is an absurdity because of the totally different conditions. Sometimes, however, *L. californicus* will behave as though he

had closely studied a page of Bob-white's primer. A personal memory of the covers of Vancouver Island is all the more pleasant because of one day during which the crested sprinters did not all get away at the crack of the gun. A wise old dog that had been brought north from California rendered yeoman service by pointing bird after bird, and for perhaps an hour two guns were busy at a very fair imitation of genuine sport. This particular lot of birds certainly lay close, and when flushed showed considerable speed, but taken on their merits, judged by our experience, they fell below the high standard of the eastern bird. Other lots, found near by, ran persistently, and by their behavior caused what may be termed much strenuous speech.

Where the birds are plentiful, at the conclusion of the breeding season the broods of a district band together, thus forming great packs, of which one may contain three or four hundred individuals. This grouselike habit of packing is common to most of the partridges, and, in spite of noted authorities to the contrary, I am convinced that the Bob-white (*Colinus virginianus*) also occasionally packs during the period of partial migration. I do not mean that hundreds join forces, but that from forty to sixty are now and then found together, all matured birds, at the opening of the season during the restless period.

The theory of two unusually large broods of that year does not apply, as in that case the plumage of the second lot would at once betray them. In my opinion, three, and perhaps four, bevies sometimes drift together by accident of the partial migration and fare forward, for the time being at least, in packlike formation. Whether or no such birds would permanently maintain their relationship I am unable to say, as (unfortunately for the cause of science!) whenever it has been my good fortune to stumble upon such an assemblage, I have behaved in a fashion not at all calculated to preserve pack formation, or even the lives of individual members.

To return to *L. californicus*. The great packs remain together until the approach of the mating season, which as a rule is some time in March; then they break up, and the important business of pairing and nesting begins. The birds make little effort at concealing the nest, which is usually upon the ground beside a stump, or under a bush, but rarely in a tree near the ground. The eggs number about fifteen and are pale buff, dotted or blotched with a darker tint. The period of incubation is about three weeks, and chicks run as soon as hatched. The male does not share the task of hatching, but both parents tend the young and warn them of approaching danger. The chicks are very clever at hiding

even in scanty cover, resembling in their ways the young of *C. virginianus*. Their food is chiefly insects until they are well grown, when seeds, berries, and various green growths are added. Owing to the ravages of gunners and trappers, the birds are now comparatively scarce in many of their old-time strongholds.

THE VALLEY PARTRIDGE
(*L. c. vallicola*)

Only a very close observer could detect the slight difference in plumage — the general paler tone — which distinguishes this from the preceding species. In habits, food, coloring, and marking of eggs, the variation, if any exist, is too slight to require comment, while in speed of foot and lack of those qualities which endear a bird to sportsmen the two are worthy rivals. The California partridge is a bird of the coast, while this one is found in the interior of California, Nevada, Oregon, and Utah, introduced in the last named. It is hardy, and in spite of its name is found on the mountains of Lower California at an elevation of between eight and nine thousand feet. Here, during the occasional very dry seasons, it does not breed, the packs remaining unbroken until more favorable conditions occur. This curious fact, of course, means the non-production of young for a season, which, in the opinion of

A DESERT RUNNER

(Gambel's Partridge)

those who judge a bird by its sporting qualities, is no great loss.

GAMBEL'S PARTRIDGE

(*L. gambeli*)

Adult male — Top of head and nape, bright chestnut; forehead, black, grayish above the bill, and crossed by a narrow white line between the eyes; a white stripe from behind eye to back of ear-coverts, bordered with black; chin, throat, and side of face, black, bordered all around with white; back and sides of neck, lead color, each feather narrowly bordered with brownish black; entire upper parts, grayish blue, darkest on upper tail-coverts, where the feathers are faintly margined with white; tail, pale blue; wings, like the back, but with a brownish tinge; the inner webs of the tertials broadly margined with white, and the outer webs of those nearest the primaries narrowly margined with yellowish white, forming a horizontal bar when the wing is closed; primaries, brown, grayish on the outer webs; upper part of breast, pale blue; lower part to abdomen, bright buff; flanks, dark chestnut, with a conspicuous white stripe along the shaft; abdomen, black, flanked by bright buff feathers, with a white stripe in the centre, bordered with chestnut; vent and under tail-coverts, pale buff with grayish brown central stripe tinged with chestnut; an upright plume composed of five or six black feathers, curving forward, and the webs turned backward, each overlapping the one behind, rises from the forehead, sometimes bending over the bill; bill, black; feet and legs, horn color. Total length, 10 inches; wing, $4\frac{3}{4}$; tail, $4\frac{1}{2}$; bill, $\frac{1}{2}$; legs, $1\frac{1}{4}$.

Adult female — Upper parts, olive-green; top of head, olive-brown; throat, dark buff, streaked with bluish gray; upper part of breast, grayish blue; rest of under parts pale buff, the feathers narrowly margined with blackish chestnut; flanks, chestnut, with central white stripe; under tail-coverts, bronzy brown, margined with pale buff; wings as in the male, the tertials less conspicuously margined with white; tail, purplish blue (Elliot). The crest is short, straight, and brownish black. Range,

western Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona to San Bernardino County, California, southern Utah, Nevada, and northwestern Mexico.

Beautiful, hardy, prolific, were it not for its detestable habit of running, this foppishly garbed varlet would occupy a high place among our upland game. But alas! like its near relatives, this bird appears to be mainly occupied either in running away from something, or in looking for something to run from. It has an annoying habit of sticking to the thorniest and most impregnable cover available, the most rugged of rocks and the steepest of slopes, and through it all it runs — and keeps on running. It can fly swiftly enough when in the humor, but the humor seldom seizes it. Only a Christian of the sternest stripe is fit to be trusted on the trail of this nimble-footed little rascal. In its pursuit, a system of rushing tactics is bound to be the most profitable, and this can be successfully followed only by a man who is strong, wiry, in good condition, and thoroughly informed concerning the habits of the game. Such a man very frequently can make a fine bag, and, needless to say, he will earn it. Those who have grown wise in the pursuit of this bird, who have larded the lean earth while rushing the open, charging the cover, and storming the heights, know that if they can get to close quarters with the pattering blue

army, sport worthy the name may follow. Scattered birds sometimes lie sufficiently close to allow of their being beaten up singly, or a brace or so at a time. When this happens, the man who has been sweating over an abomination of hard going, may come in for a bit of very pretty shooting. When flushed the birds move smartly, keeping low, and usually curving away to one side, when they offer a fair, small, and fast mark. In addition to running, Gambel's partridge will not hesitate to tree in any convenient growth. It also has an exasperating habit of running to the edge of a cañon, flying down into it, and climbing up the farther side, which means the hardest of hard work for whoever would follow. While apparently fond of the bottoms and lower sides of cañons, it may be found almost anywhere up to a height of eight thousand feet or more, and never very far from water.

The birds pair during April. The nest shows little skill, being a slight hollow roughly lined with a few leaves or blades of grass, but it usually is well concealed. The eggs number from twelve to fifteen, and are marked with various shades of brown upon a pale buff ground, the whole overcast with a purplish tinge. Instances of the nest being placed in a tree or cactus some feet above the ground are on record. The period of incubation is about twenty-eight days. The

young run as soon as hatched, and in their habits of hiding and taking advantage of the slightest cover resemble the young of the Bob-white. Frequently two broods are raised in a season. The love call cannot well be represented in type; the alarm note is a grating sound, while the signal to decamp is an unmistakable *quit.*

THE MASSENA PARTRIDGE

(*Crytonyx montezuma*)

Adult male — Forehead, black, with white stripe passing upward from nostril; top of head, pale brown, barred with black; occiput, plain brown, feathers forming a short, thick crest; rest of head, white, with a plumbeous stripe from angle of mouth, extending in a curved line beneath the ear, meeting a broader line that crosses it at right angles, and extends from above the ear to the lower margin of the black throat; a small triangular curved black patch beneath the eye; the brown of the head is separated from the white by a narrow black line; the white, on side and fore neck, is margined beneath by a rather broad black band; upper parts, reddish brown, barred with black, and streaked with buff; secondaries, pale purplish gray, spotted with black; primaries, dark brown, the outer webs spotted with white; sides of breast and flanks, dark plumbeous, almost black, spotted with white; line through middle of breast and the belly, dark chestnut; rest of under parts and thighs, velvety black; maxilla, black; mandible, black, with yellowish spot on the side. Total length, 8¾ inches; wing, 5; tail, 2¼; tarsus, 1¼; bill, along culmen, ⅝.

Adult female — General color, light pinkish cinnamon, upper parts barred with black. Head, without black or white stripes, barred on top and crest with black; throat, pinky white; a few black spots on flanks and lower parts of chest; abdomen and anal region, buff; secondaries, brownish black, barred with pale cinnamon; primaries, dark brown, spotted with white on outer

webs; maxilla, black; mandible, pale horn color. Measurements, same as male. The downy young are prettily marked above with light and dark brown, spotted with a darker shade. Throat, pale brown, shading into dull white below. Range, western Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, table-lands of Mexico.

A harlequin in markings and a fool in actions might truthfully be said of this peculiar bird. Of its two common names — "black-bellied" and "fool quail" — the one aptly refers to an oddity of its coloration, while the other has been earned by its apparent lack of that cleverness which goes far toward making the fame of some of its relatives. To me, its rounded back, movements, and the spotted sides are comically suggestive of a small guinea fowl. It prefers high ground, and in the mountain ranges as high as nine thousand feet. In disposition and habits it differs broadly from all members of the group, being seemingly too confiding to suspect danger. It shows no tendency to run, it does not pack, in fact in seldom-visited regions each family keeps to itself and follows the even tenor of a placid life without concern for the ways of the human destroyer. When closely approached, it may move sufficiently to escape being trodden upon, but fear seems foreign to its gentle nature. As often as not it will stand motionless while regarding the intruder with an air of mild wonder. Or, possibly in obedience to some instinctive trust in coloration, it will de-

liberately squat in plain view and remain motionless until struck with a whip or stick.

Not a very promising subject for sport, would naturally be one's first thought, yet there is more in these queer small birds than is at first apparent. Once flushed, they speed away at a great rate, offering fair, but not too easy, marks. They will then scatter and lie as close as the northern birds. To beat them up one at a time is no poor imitation of Bob-white shooting, and the use of a good sixteen or twenty gauge would add zest to the sport. It is to be hoped, as it probably will prove, that a better acquaintance with the ways of the shooting man will sharpen this bird's wits until it learns to take better care of itself. As it is, its sole fault from the sporting standpoint is an excess of faith in the generous tendency of mankind.

The nest is a grass-lined hollow of the ground, and usually contains about ten brilliantly white eggs. It is commonly found in a clump of grass, or under a shrub, and as a rule well concealed.

THE GROUSE FAMILY

Sub-family *Tetraoninæ*, which includes all grouse. The American species are: the ruffed grouse, the dusky grouse, the spruce-grouse, the pinnated grouse, or prairie-chicken, the sharp-tailed grouse, the cock-of-the-plains, and the ptarmigan.

Genus *Bonasa* — Head crested, rudimentary air-sac covered by a tuft of broad, soft, glossy feathers; tail broad, long, rounded, fan-shaped; legs bare from heel. The ruffed grouse, *B. umbellus*; Sabine's grouse, *B. u. sabini*; the Canadian ruffed grouse, *B. u. togata*, and the gray ruffed grouse, *B. u. umbelloides*.

Genus *Dendragapus* — Head slightly crested; tail long, square at tip; air-sacs on neck. The dusky grouse, *D. obscurus*; the sooty grouse, *D. o. fuliginosus*; Richardson's grouse, *D. o. richardsoni*.

Genus *Canachites* — Head without crest; tail moderately long, nearly square at tip; no air-sacs on neck. The Canada grouse, *C. canadensis*, and the Franklin's grouse, *C. franklini*.

Genus *Tympanuchus* — Head crested; winglike tufts above air-sacs on neck; tail short, rounded. The pinnated grouse, *T. americanus*; heath-hen, *T. cupido*; lesser prairie-hen, *T. pallidicinctus*; and Attwater's prairie-hen, *T. a. attwateri*.

Genus *Pedioecetes* — Head slightly crested; no winglike tufts above air-sacs; tail pointed. The sharp-tailed grouse, *P. phasianellus*; the Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, *P. p. columbianus*, and the prairie sharp-tailed grouse, *P. p. campestris*.

Genus *Centrocercus* — No crest; air-sacs very large; tail very long, of narrow, stiff feathers; male much larger than female. The cock-of-the-plains (sage-cock), *C. urophasianus*.

Genus *Lagopus* — No crest; tarsi and toes densely feathered; tail medium length, slightly rounded; plumage turning white in winter. The willow-ptarmigan, *L. lagopus*; Allen's ptarmigan, *L. l. alleni*; rock-ptarmigan, *L. rupestris*; Reinhardt's ptarmigan, *L. r. reinhardti*; Welch's ptarmigan, *L. r. welchi*; Nel-

son's ptarmigan, *L. r. nelsoni;* Turner's ptarmigan, *L. r. atkensis;* Townsend's ptarmigan, *L. r. townsendi;* Evermann's ptarmigan, *L. evermanni;* and the white-tailed ptarmigan, *L. leucurus*.

THE RUFFED GROUSE

(*Bonasa umbellus*)

Adult male—Upper parts varied with yellowish brown and gray, barred on head, neck, and upper part of back and wings, with black and rufous; lower part of back and rump, gray, interspersed with dark red, and ovate spots of pale buff, surrounded with black; scapulars and wing-coverts conspicuously streaked with buffy white; primaries, grayish brown, outer webs barred with creamy white; upper tail-coverts, gray, mottled and barred with black; on sides of neck, tufts of broad, lengthened feathers, black, tipped with light brown and shot with metallic lustre; throat, buff, faintly barred with brown; lower parts, buff on chest, shading to white below, barred with brown; under tail-coverts, buff, barred with dark brown and with a V-shaped white mark at tip; tail, gray, or yellowish brown; sometimes rusty, mottled with black and crossed by irregular buff bands, bordered above by black, and a broad, subterminal black band bordered above and below with gray, mottled with black, the upper gray bar bordered above with a narrow black bar; legs, feathered to middle of tarsus; maxilla, black; mandible, horn color. Total length, about 16 inches; wing, $7\frac{1}{2}$; tail, $6\frac{1}{2}$.

The female closely resembles the male, but is a trifle smaller and has the neck-tufts smaller—frequently is without them. The downy young have the upper parts chestnut, a black line from back of eye, across ear-coverts; under parts, light buff. Range—eastern United States and southern Canada, from Massachusetts to northern Georgia, Mississippi, and Arkansas, westward to the Dakotas.

While a stanch supporter of Bob-white's claim to the premier position among upland game, the writer pleads guilty to a genuine love for the

ruffed grouse. Not that the bird has ever held out any marked inducement, or in any way whatever encouraged a closer relationship, but rather because of the number and infinite variety of the difficulties which have marked the progress, or lack of progress, of the suit. There is an old saying that "Blessings brighten when they take their flight." If this holds good of ruffed grouse, the writer gravely suspects that some of his lost grouse probably by now are too incandescent for the naked eye.

Usually a haunter of the most difficult country and the densest cover, this bird can be successfully pursued only by the man who can combine with rapid, accurate shooting a quick perception and ready resource. The grouse is wily, especially in much disturbed covers, and the conditions may vary with every shot. The man who can average half his birds, taking them as they flush, is entitled to high rank even among the best of company. The writer has shot ruffed grouse in most of the good sections of that tremendous expanse of country which extends from ocean to ocean, from the latitude of northern Pennsylvania to north of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Within this huge belt is to be found the cream of the shooting, and nowhere are there easy birds — that is, after they once take wing in earnest. There, of course, are uneducated grouse in remote corners.

Some of these birds may betray a confiding trust which may astonish a tenderfoot, but once they realize their mistake and turn on the full voltage, they go like all possessed.

The habits of the grouse vary somewhat in different localities, but as a general rule it is to be found in what is termed heavy cover, usually another name for the worst there is in that particular section. A snarl of thickets, swamps, dense second growth, brier patches, heavy woods, beech ridges, dark ravines, forested hill and mountain sides, the brushy banks of streams — each and all find favor with the strong, swift fliers, and right well do they know how to make the most of every protective feature of their chosen ground.

The love-making of the grouse is precisely what might be expected of so game and vigorous a fellow. He chooses some spot which suits his fancy, and from it sends notice to all males and females within hearing that he is open to engagement — either way, love or war, or both. He usually gets both. The challenge is not a vocal effort, but the well-known drumming, a most peculiar sound.

Perhaps nothing connected with the ways of game birds has caused more discussion in and out of print, or more bitter controversies, than this same drumming. One of the chief causes of the misunderstanding was the ignorance of the men

most interested — the sportsmen. Not so long ago these men, as a class, knew comparatively little about the habits of their favorite game during the close season. They hunted and shot, and while so doing naturally familiarized themselves with the ways of the quarry during the open season. That knowledge was necessary, for it enabled them to get the game; but further than that few of them cared to go. The sportsmen-naturalists, so numerous to-day, were then few and far apart — it was to kill, not to combine entertaining study with killing in moderation. Hence, when untrained eyes did not know how to look, they misread many of the signs. They saw the male grouse upon his favorite drumming-log, saw him flap his wings, heard the drumming, and jumped to the conclusion that the grouse got upon a log because he wanted to thump it with his wings and so produce the sound. It never occurred to them that a bird's wings striking a log could not produce the sound, or that wings so used would of necessity speedily wear out, or at least show plain evidence of hard usage. So they told about seeing grouse beat logs with their wings, and their listeners, or readers, not knowing any better, accepted the stories.

The fact is that the drumming grouse beats only the air and possibly his own body with his wings. Variations of the habit are common

among gallinaceous birds. The wing-clapping of the domestic cock is too well known to require comment. The gobbler, wild and tame, and the peacock make a rustling with the wings. The pheasant makes a peculiar whirring; pigeons, a vigorous clapping. If any one will pass his hand over a tame gobbler engaged in strutting, he will at once notice that the bird feels as though he were full of air. Parts of him are. In the region of the crop, and along the sides under the wings, he feels like a big, feathery bladder. Startle him, or slap him smartly, and he may let the air out through his mouth with a rush. If he be sufficiently tame to stand it, pat him smartly in rapid succession with the open hands, and the sound will be a muffled beating, not at all unlike the drumming of the grouse. A well-directed boot against a foot-ball produces a somewhat similar thump, and the writer has drummed no bad imitation of it upon a well-filled punching-bag.

To stalk and closely approach a drumming grouse is a comparatively easy task, provided the stalker move cautiously until reasonably near, and then stirs only while the drummer is in action. A good glass, which, by the way, every intelligent observer should carry, will reveal some interesting facts. The bird may drum upon a log — the favorite place — or a stump, a mossy stone, an ant-hill, or even upon level ground, — notes care-

fully made include all of these. To the drumming-place the bird will return day after day, sometimes for more than one season. Most country boys know where is a drumming-log.

When inclined to drum, the male mounts the log, or whatever it may be, and for a time moves to and fro, peering this way and that and apparently listening intently. While so doing his plumage presents a loosely ruffled appearance, his wings half-trailing, his tail half-spread. Presently he puffs himself up, throws his head far back, elevates his beautiful fan of a tail and spreads it to the complete semicircle. He is now in the pose of a strutting gobbler, or peacock, and he looks somewhat like a brown fantail pigeon. The tufts on his neck are elevated and spread, the wings are trailing, and he struts, sometimes with a quick forward movement like a gobbler, occasionally merely turning this way and that, like a peacock, this whenever what he is on affords scant room for evolutions. Next, the head is thrust forward to the full length of the neck, the tail is partially closed and lowered almost to the level of the back, and he assumes the position of a cock upon a fence the instant before starting to crow. Then the wing-beats begin — at first slow and measured, then quicker and quicker until the separate beats are lost, thus: Buff ——— buff —— buff —— buff — buff — buff — buff - buff-burr-r-r-r!

The sound is peculiar, difficult to describe and as difficult to locate, for it unquestionably has great ventriloquial power. Sometimes it is strongly suggestive of low, distant thunder, especially when the opening beats have not been caught. Again it is like the deep, muffled roll of a drum, or the sound of a distant carriage rapidly driven over a short wooden bridge. The writer has more than once been fooled by the sound of wheels coming through the woods. At the conclusion of the effort the bird straightens to his full height and appears to listen for a reply. Should there be no response, he may repeat his performance an indefinite number of times.

Some scientists have declared that all the bird's peering about is merely a sharp lookout for the expected female. I will go farther and say that it is of threefold purport — *i.e.* to locate the female, an approaching rival, or a skulking peril. While in the act of drumming, the bird appears to be oblivious to everything but its own passion. This is why it can be stalked. The instant the drumming ceases the bird seems to realize that it has been taking chances, so it carefully scrutinizes every yard of its surroundings. Let the stalker then make the slightest move and there will be no more drumming for some time. A grouse flushed directly from the drumming-place is apt to forsake it altogether. My theory is that the

grouse thoroughly understands the situation; that while he hopes to see an admiring hen, or hens, — for he's a regular Turk, — he knows he may see a man, or a lynx, or a fox, or some other cold-hearted brute. Or, worse yet, one or other may be there and he not see quite soon enough! Meanwhile, the hen, or hens, have been listening to the drumming and admiring the performer. They are somewhat like some larger hens, inasmuch as a bold front compels their admiration; also, because they know that a shy, timorous, mind-all-ready-made-up-but-it's-so-sudden sort of a policy is the deadliest. So, being wise virgins possessed of a few shares of standard oil, they're in no great hurry. Eventually he weds the lot, if there be a lot, conducts a harem for a time — then deserts them, one and all.

Should the response to the drummer's effort be a male, there speedily is trouble. The old, old struggle for the survival of the fittest is — well — fit! They go together with all the dash and spirit one would expect of such game, strong fellows, and frequently the battle is furious and prolonged. Out of a maelstrom of whirling fight, one presently emerges, minus some blood and feathers, but plus some useful knowledge, and the subsequent proceedings in that woody Eden interest him no more.

The duties of choosing a site for the nest,

attending to the slight construction thereof, and hatching the eggs, devolves upon the female. There is some difference of opinion about this, but I am convinced that, as a rule, the male deserts his mate so soon as the breeding season is over. It may be that when, as sometimes happens, there are but one male and one female in a certain cover, they remain together, but I have yet to flush two old birds with a brood of chicks. The nest usually is well concealed, but there are exceptions to this. It may be under a log or an overhanging rock, between the roots of a stump, or tree, in a thicket, a fallen top, under a brush-pile, or exposed in an open spot. As an architect the grouse has no claim to distinction; a slight hollow scratched in the ground and roughly lined with leaves, grass, or pine needles, is all it requires. The eggs vary through shades of buff with brown spots. The number ranges from eight to about a dozen. The period of incubation begins about the first of May and lasts nearly four weeks. The hen sticks very close to the nest, and if driven away seldom goes farther than is absolutely necessary for her own safety. The young run as soon as the down on them is dry. They are very active and able to hide in the merest trifle of cover.

The hen grouse is a model mother. Until the young are sufficiently strong to roost upon

branches, she covers them as a domestic hen covers her chicks. Young grouse, like young turkeys, cannot stand a wetting; this the mother knows, and she is careful not to lead them through wet cover. At the first sign of rain she calls them up, never herself heeding a liberal spattering so long as the chicks are dry under her. Up to a certain age young grouse are the most delicate of all game, and, could the figures be obtained, it is extremely likely they would show a loss of at least one-third of the young before they had attained the size of quail. This, of course, taking the average for a number of seasons. Five consecutive favorable seasons, *i.e.* dry from the hatching time till the chicks are past the critical stage, would mean a grand lot of birds. The conditions reversed would surely mean a marked scarcity. There is a species of tick which plays the mischief; and I suspect that a disease closely akin to the roup which occasionally prevails among young poultry is accountable for a deal of the losses. As is true of many other birds, when once the grouse has run the gauntlet of infantile disorders, it becomes as hardy and rugged a bird as can be found. The food consists of "mast," many sorts of wild berries, wild grapes, the foliage of wintergreen, buttercups, partridge-berry, clover, and other growths, grasshoppers, crickets, and, no doubt, other insects.

During winter the principal food is the buds of birch and other trees. Not infrequently it resorts to the leaves of the alder, which impart to the flesh a pronounced bitter taste. Birds so fed and left long undrawn are apt to prove poisonous to persons eating freely of them. The young feed upon insects and various tender growths.

When a brood is half grown it changes its roosting habit and takes to the trees, those of medium size and overgrown with grape-vines being most favored. About this time, too, the young acquire the treeing habit, and ever after, when flushed by a dog, they are apt to tree. The writer had a peculiar experience with a brood about the size of quail. He was fishing, and had for a comrade a young pointer dog, all liver color. This pup, as pups will, found fishing not sufficiently strenuous to hold his attention for long, so to help pass time he started a lone-hand raid of an adjacent thicket. A sudden tremendous uproar attracted my attention, and, to my astonishment, I saw an old hen grouse vigorously belaboring the bewildered pup with her wings and giving him a piece of her mind in a torrent of cacklings, such as I had never dreamed a grouse capable of uttering. The poor pup, after first trying to make a point, and then to grab her, finally bolted in dismay. She followed him for about a dozen yards, beating him about the rump

with her wings, which kept up a thunderous whirring. She acted exactly like a wrathful old fowl, and the pup like a condemned fool. The utter discomfiture of the pup, the abruptness of the interruption, and the astounding valor of the old hen gave me temporary paresis, for, in trying to see a little more, I forgot where I was, stepped off my rock, and brought up in about four feet of ice-cold water.

To first swear, then secure the pup and lie low for developments, was a natural sequence. The young were in the trees, several of them visible after a cautious scrutiny, and in about ten minutes there sounded a low, musical chirruping very like the sound emitted by a red squirrel between the coughing, sputtering notes. Presently one and another of the young responded with cries like those of very young turkeys; then one after another fluttered down and ran to their anxious mother.

An interesting query is, for what did the mother mistake the dog? for I am convinced that she had no idea what he was. Possibly she took him for a fox, or a wolf, for surely her instinct would have warned her not to try such tactics with one of the cat kind, any of which almost certainly would have destroyed her with one sweep of a nimble paw. A possible solution is that she did not at all understand the silent,

halting, uniformly colored enemy, and bravely took the chances of a desperate bluff. This incident is one of the most striking illustrations of the devotion of the hen which the writer can recall. The usual course of the mother bird is to throw herself in the path of the intruder, and, by simulating lameness, to draw him after her and away from the hiding chicks. This pretty deceit is one of the most touching sights which reward the observant bird-lover.

The treeing habit of the grouse, once a great protection to it, is now its bane. This is an interesting point, as it strikingly illustrates the folly of sticking to old-fashioned methods after improvements have been introduced, and also that folly of follies — underestimating the ability of one's opponent. Æons on æons ago the grouse developed the trick of taking to a tree to avoid peril terrestrial, and no doubt it considered itself a very smart bird. At that time, strangely enough, its two winning cards in the game of life and death were taking to a tree and leaving a tree. Being a bud-eater at certain seasons, the grouse naturally sought the trees for food. Among the branches it was comparatively safe from quadrupeds, although some of its foes were clever climbers. But there were others, — the birds of prey, — and to avoid these the grouse went back to earth. So it played its game of

going to the trees to escape its four-footed foes, and dropping to the rocks and brush to baffle winged ones, and this must have answered very well for a long time, for the grouse flourished and waxed fat. His one human foe was then an Indian, clever with bow and arrow and snares; but still the treeing trick was useful, for good arrows were easily lost if shot upward among trees; the grouse was comparatively small game, while an Indian hated to make arrows as he hated labor in any form. But the old-fashioned firearm eventually became common, and at once the grouse's erstwhile strong point became its deadly weakness.

No doubt birds that were once wounded in trees learned to trust to their wings when next man approached, for to-day the grouse, except in remote corners, will seldom tree unless the man be accompanied by a dog. A grouse educated on modern principles — *i.e.* one that has enjoyed the questionable advantage of feeling lead driven through some part of it — seldom offers a second fair chance; but all are not so wise. To most of them the dog is merely the old four-footed peril — a foxlike creature unable to climb, against which a tree is an absolute safeguard. Naturally enough the first impulse is to at once take the oft-tried remedy for a well-understood evil. Hence we see birds tree above the dog and remain calmly

looking down at the intruder, and even moving upon the limbs as though only slightly interested in the whole business. But let the man follow the dog, and a change takes place. One of two things happens — either the grouse leave the tree, or they stretch to their full height and remain bolt upright and perfectly motionless. When so posed only an experienced eye can readily detect them, for they would easily pass for so many decayed and broken stubs. Even the skilled sportsman, who knows this habit of the bird, and who is warned by the actions of the dog that the game is somewhere in a tree immediately above, frequently has difficulty in locating the quarry. His safest plan is first to let his eye follow the trunk to the top, as the probability is that the game will be perched near the trunk. If this fails, the next thing is to begin at the lowest limb and examine it from the trunk to the tip, and repeat the process limb after limb. This, of course, must eventually locate the bird; but the sportsman will do well to keep his gun ready for swift action. Strange as it may appear, the bird seems to know the instant it is observed; then it at once takes wing. A flushed grouse is apt to fly straight away from the rising-point and in ordinary woods not very far. Should the bird keep low, the chances are that it will pitch upon the ground; but if the last view of it shows a

raising of the line of flight, it probably means that the bird has gone to a tree. A thorough scrutiny of the trees about where the bird disappeared is then worth while.

The question of the propriety of shooting a treed grouse must be left to the discretion and sportsmanship of the individual in pursuit. The writer is a thorough believer in pure sport for sport's sake; he prides himself upon having a clean record from boyhood onward, and he frankly admits having shot many a treed grouse, and this after he was considered a very fair shot. While caring nothing for the dead bird except as a dainty fare for himself, or a gift to a friend, he never hesitates over trimming the head off a perching bird whenever, in his judgment, the conditions forbid the hope of anything like a fair flying shot. So long as the nature of the cover offers a reasonably open field, true sportmanship would insist upon the bird being given perhaps a bit the best of the odds; otherwise, it is merely a problem of how badly one needs that particular grouse. The same thing will apply to a bird seen running — by the way, none too easy a proposition. Very often in thickets such shots are quite pardonable. Those who care for the small rifle may find pleasure in using it on treed birds; yet it is questionable if such shooting is true sport, for even an ordinary performer would seldom fail at such

short range. He will, of course, only aim at the head or neck, for any duffer might hit the big body and spoil meat.

Apropos of the rifle, two peculiar shots are worth mentioning. A party of us were in the Mattawa moose country. The particular day was Sunday, and the camp rule was the only right one. We were lounging about on the moss, and I happened to be oiling a Winchester 45–90. Suddenly the guide pointed to a big hemlock about fifty yards away and remarked: "See the sunlight on that fur — it's a marten." Amid the blackness of the centre of the hemlock was a single splash of light, and it glowed upon what appeared to be red fur.

"And the Sabbath law is?" I asked the judge.

"To plug all martens every day — to shoot from where you sit, and to allow the court to shoot one deer in the water if you miss. So mote it be!" was his Honor's decision.

At the report the marten shook loose about a peck of feathers, and went roaring away to a near-by ravine, shedding more feathers every yard. Before it reached cover the wings were set, and it slanted down at an amazing pace.

The guide chased after, while we stared at each other, and the court muttered an astonished "Well — I'll — be — d——!" Soon the guide

came back with a bobtailed grouse, which he passed round for inspection. The big ball had hit it squarely in the rump, carrying away inches of the back and most of the intestines; the legs hung by mere shreds of skin and flesh, yet the bird had flown fully twenty yards, and finished its trip upon dead, set wings.

The other shot was different, but with the same rifle, which, by the way, had a tinkered stock with a shotgun plate for quick work. The party had insisted upon one day's hounding, and knowing my penchant for still hunting, had sent me off to a small island, a mere rock, where, as the judge said, "It would be good and still all day." The chances were a thousand to one against any deer coming to that rock, but they had been known to take that course, so there was need of a guard. For hours there was nothing doing. The dogs were clanging through the woods far to the eastward, while a lazy man lay and stared at the dreamy landscape, or played with the wintergreen which matted his couch.

At last something did come — a big grouse, presumably after wintergreen. He lit on a short stub, at once saw the enemy, and promptly drew himself up and stiffened. He never moved while the rifle was brought to the ready, then he suddenly discovered gold quartz, and set off to file his claim, or something. He went as only a

scared grouse a quarter of a mile from cover can go, and the ball caught him fair in the back when he had travelled about forty yards. Then the man behind the gun stared at the bird in the water, and wondered why Fate had seen fit to weave that particular mesh, why the ball had happened to touch the mark, and why there was more genuine satisfaction over the kill than there would have been had the mark been a buck.

It sometimes appears as though the grouse yet preserved a trace of an old-time migratory instinct which impels it about mid-autumn to wander far from its usual haunts. A paragraph referring to the capture or sight of a live bird in the centre of some large town or city may be found in many a paper, and always about the end of September or early in October. Birds which have struck the wires above busy streets are not unfrequently picked up, and these things go to show that some grouse are given to taking long night flights. The writer's old home lies within the limits of a small city, and fully a mile and a half from the nearest possible grouse cover, yet he has several times seen, and more than once shot, grouse (each time a lone bird) in his garden. Once a big cock smashed through a pane of glass and took refuge under a parlor sofa. There were many specimens of stuffed game in that room, and if the glass-smashing bird yearned for a place among the

chosen, he had his desire. One of the grouse in that collection, an unusually large and very brown specimen, has large ruffs of a lightish chocolate color instead of the usual black.

Before leaving the question of partial migration, a reference to some peculiar encounters with grouse in town may not be out of place. Just before the writer bade farewell to his "teens," he and his chosen comrades played ball enthusiastically and fairly well. The best all-round player was a small, wiry chap whose specialty was catching. Upon wet days the chimney swifts used to skim low through the streets and one time this chap made a fair catch of one. The shock killed the swift, but that didn't matter. Shortly after the writer also caught a swift and broke its neck in so doing. That didn't matter either; but what did matter was that two young prigs went strutting about as the great and only bird-catchers, and naturally as rivals. Some time after the writer had occasion to interview his rival and he found him sunning himself on the roof of a shed. As the conversation opened, something whizzed above the roof, the rival made a leap and a grab, and landed on his head in a manure-pile. Clutched in his fist was a big piece of skin and a lot of feathers which clearly belonged to a ruffed grouse — the poor bird buzzed on and in its fright darted into a shed, where it was later found and

mercifully despatched. That settled the rivalry. Anybody who could grab ruffed grouse in this parabolic manner and land soft, clearly outclassed the writer, and the citizens hardened their hearts against him amid revilings. It was indeed a bitter dose to swallow! Years later, when the writer had whiskers, he was turning a corner in the same town, when something like a brown shell came humming by. A naturally quick hand had gained speed from sparring, and out it flashed. There was an amazing shock, but it closed tightly on a grouse, and it made the bones crack before it let go too!

R-e-v-e-n-g-e! And hey for the rival, at last outdone! That worthy examined the bird, demanded the story of its capture, listened attentively, spat, returned the bird, spat again, and crisply remarked: "Yer a liar! I sold that bird to Blank four days ago!"

Some fellows are simply insufferable!

After the young grouse have reached maturity, they will remain with the mother throughout the winter unless too much harassed. The old males join the broods late in the fall, and each lot selects its winter range. Before the severe cold and deep snow they are apt to favor high-lying cover, growths of beeches, to which the leaves cling long, brier patches, and brushy ground. At

this time they frequently roost in the trees, especially in vine-encumbered ones. After the winter has fairly set in and the snow becomes deep, most of the birds retire to lowlands, such as heavily timbered swamps and extensive growths of tall saplings. From these sanctuaries they forage the surrounding more open country, speeding back to the heavier cover when alarmed. In regions of heavy snow, the birds creep into low, snug growths and often allow themselves to be deeply covered. They also never hesitate over plunging into a drift and burrowing under to the warmest of quarters. The track and the holes made by the bird entering and leaving the snow have been noted by most of the sportsmen who go afield very late in the season. It has been claimed that many grouse fall victims to crust, as do the quail. Proof of this I have never seen in spite of much winter shooting, but I have repeatedly seen the holes in firm crust through which the grouse had passed to freedom. It may be that my experience has been an exceptional one, but I have never found a dead grouse in the woods that had not been either snared or shot.

The flight of a big, strong grouse is the personification of headlong dash with power. It rises with a sudden, thunderous whirring which never fails to stir the very cockles of a veteran's heart, and which plays the deuce with the nerves

of a novice. There is no drag or hesitancy about it, the bird gets to top speed within a few yards, and where there is thick cover — characteristic grouse cover — he plunges for the thickest of it like a cannon-ball. One might be pardoned for marvelling how the bird manages to escape collisions with close-standing trunks or heavy boughs, but it does, and whizzes away with a neatness and despatch positively wonderful to behold. Yet, fast as it goes, the bird has perfect control over its course, and never forgets to take advantage of the first convenient shelter. It will whisk behind the nearest trunk and then dart away with that trunk exactly in a line between itself and the gun. Grouse unnumbered have been saved by this clever trick, and tons of shot have been stopped too soon by the saving trees. This habit of dodging behind shot-proof obstacles is peculiar to the ruffed grouse; whether it be the result of education, or is purely instinctive, is an open question. Whichever it be, it frequently is possible to outmanœuvre it by going up to the flush a bit to one side of the pointing dog, instead of directly in his rear as most men do. The partial flanking movement, in the majority of instances, will insure a more or less quartering shot — a bit more difficult than a straightaway drive, but less liable to interference.

That the shooting of this bird is difficult goes

without saying, yet the fault of the great majority of misses lies with the shooter. The trouble with most men is that they shoot too quick. The grouse has a knack of springing precisely when and where he is not expected. This, coupled with the roaring flush, shakes any except the service-steadied nerve — usual result, something closely akin to blind snap-shooting. But the true cause of perhaps half the misses is undershooting. In most cases the bird is rising and rushing forward at the same time ; the broad tail with its conspicuous black band catches the eye, and the gun is held on the tail — which means just under the bird, instead of where it should be, a couple of inches or more above the rising back. The tail, too, helps a man to miss squarely crossing shots by increasing the apparent length of the bird. This causes one to think he is centring the bird, when in reality he is centring the length of the mark from bill to tail-tip. This means that he is covering the after portion of the body, when he should be slightly ahead of the region of the crop. This difference of several inches actual measurement is enough to place the bird without the deadly zone of the charge and within the zone of scattered pellets, even at very short range. Sportsmen who have tried the pheasants of Great Britain, or the varieties of the pheasant which have been acclimatized

in this country, understand how much a conspicuous tail may mislead an eye trained to accuracy on short-tailed game. The writer is a stanch believer in the value of holding well ahead of all angling and crossing game of whatever species. Not one in one hundred is missed through overleading, for even when the gun is inches too far in advance, a single diverging pellet may yet prove deadly, because, if it touches any part of the quarry, that part is apt to be of the head, the neck, the region of the heart, or a wing.

So many writers have referred to the noisy flush of the ruffed grouse, that the belief is prevalent that the bird always rises upon loud-sounding pinions. This is erroneous. When unalarmed, the bird rises without any noticeable whirring.

SOME GLIMPSES OF GROUSING

The best ruffed grouse shooting the writer has enjoyed has been in the grand covers of Wisconsin, Michigan, and western Ontario, the merits of the grounds ranking in order as named. The most difficult sport was in the Red River Valley, the mighty growths of British Columbia, and the mountains of Pennsylvania. Let us take a peep at each in turn.

Imagine a long, easy, sun-kissed slope in the most beautiful section of the magnificent " Badger

state" — time mid-afternoon. Half of this slope is gleaming stubble which rolls in sleepy, golden billows to a strand of dull crimsons and cooling bronze, where the waist-high scrub-oaks and briers and dwarf hazels weave together, glowing like some huge rare rug of Orient spread over the everlasting hills. Beyond all this, stern ramparts of grim gray stone, hearsed with sombre pines, beneath which trail heavy crimson banners of creepers, as though flung earthward in grief for the passing glory of the year. Misting it all, softening where too harsh, transforming dusk corridors into silvery reaches of immeasurable length, spreads the magic of Indian summer, as though Autumn had flung afar a net of shimmering gossamer in a playful attempt to bind captive each giant of rock and pine.

It is indeed a pretty picture, but the prettiest bit of all is in the foreground. It is a group which well might startle those only acquainted with the dignities of metropolitan life and its surroundings. Three figures compose the group, and they are arranged like a wedge. The thin edge of the wedge has been inserted into some of the most picturesque fragments of North America — and driven home afterward. It is a dog — a grand white fellow, with the hall-mark of his breeding, a lemon head. Big, and leanly strong, his white coat shining with healthy lustre, his

muscles wirelike from wholesome toil, he stands there as if carved from yon vein of snowy marble gashing the distant cliff.

Yards rearward, at the right angle of the base of the wedge, is another and entirely different figure. The coat of a workmanlike brown, the intent, half-crouching pose, graceful in many curves, the poise of the perfect head, the clean-cut profile, expressive eyes, lips parted in mute expectancy, complete as perfect a picture of —

A bench winner, did you say?

Man! what are you talking about? She's worthy of the bench all right — she'd adorn it too! but did I really describe her according to the pointer standard. Ye gods! well, anyhow, there's no sense keeping her standing there.

The remaining figure looks like a tramp in its dingy garb, but it feels like a king for the moment at least. The apple of its eye is the grand white dog; the crab-apple of its other eye is the crouching female to the right; while the glory-about-to-be to both eyes is yet hidden in the stubble.

Boo-oo-oo-m! A big bird roars up, and the man starts violently and rocks backward two inches out of plumb, for instead of the expected "chicken" he sees a fantail with a broad velvet band which is unmistakable. The way that gun remembers and gets into action is a marvel to see, and the bird goes down, despite its speed, not thirty-five yards away.

THE RUFFED GROUSE STRUTTING

The other figures stanchly hold their points, and a low, eager whisper says, "Good — give it to them!"

Boo-oo-Boo-oo-r-r! One, two, a third, rise and rush for the cover, which the first and second are doomed never to reach. The gun seems to be a live thing, going down, breaking, and spitting out empties of itself and fairly reaching for more shells. Then — *Boo-oorr!* again and again, then a general explosion, and half a dozen birds are flung into the air at once. Hasty fingers work in vain this time, for no man living has a license to load after a ruffed fellow has started. The man in question is half rattled by his amazing good fortune, and for the moment he forgets that the lemon-headed dog is wise as serpents are supposed to be, and that he is still propped.

Says the man, as he half turns, "Little woman, I've shot ruffed grouse from ahem! to Halifax, but this is the first time ever I tackled 'em in Paradise! Why! if I'd had a repeater I could have — *Boo-oo-oom-m!*"

The white dog knew! To whirl, to miss clean, to try a desperate chance with the second — all these were so easy that he did them all there and then. But a random shot will kill, etc., for a curious thing happened. The straightaway bird probably had its head turned to one side, for at the second report it lurched for an instant, appeared

to momentarily stagger in its flight, then up it went in a mighty spiral, as though boring into the blue beyond like a feathered corkscrew.

The man had loaded like lightning, and his first impulse was to rush under and shoot the climber. Then he thought of the dog, and of something else, so he stood his ground while he and his comrades stared with big eyes at the strange exhibition.

Round and round in narrowing circles, higher and higher, climbed the stricken thing, the shattered nerve refusing to act, the blind eyes failing to direct as the game heart wished. Up and up, in smaller and smaller circles, with fan full-spread and whirring wings, it toiled with nervous strength, until it looked like a golden lark, for the old sun was sorry to see it and glorified its dying agony. At last the seemingly small wings stilled and set full-spread, the legs stretched stiffly, and like a kite with broken string it started earthward.

"I'll catch it," said the man, as he laid down his gun and sped forward with long leaps. He did catch it without breaking a feather. He showed the woman where the single pellet had struck.

"The rest are all down yonder in the scrub, and we'll get — " here he happened to glance into the woman's eyes and hastily changed what he had intended to say into, "the rest some other

time. That is," — he continued (for he had learned about women from other women), "if ever I molest this lot again."

"Poor thing," she half sighed, "it was so — " then she stopped.

"I'll stuff it for you myself," he remarked, as he picked up the gun and turned homeward. Her eyes shone with pleasure.

"What devilish queer things *they* are, anyhow," muttered that same man to himself next morning as he ploughed into the brush behind the white dog's first point.

Boo-oo-om-m! — *Boo-oo-m!* — Bang!

"Hi! this is where I get even — one of you fan-tailed fools almost got me into trouble yesterday," chuckled the man, and he grinned with a devilish glee.

Along a certain Wisconsin steep runs a peculiar steplike formation — a smooth pathway one-third of a mile long. Upon one side and for many feet above rises a huge slope of forested rock, which, upon the outer side of the path, falls away into a dim ravine, so deep that only the tallest of its tree-tops rise above the level of the path. Viewed from the end, the effect is that of a natural picture gallery hung with many gorgeous "bits" (where the creepers and sumach droop) from that master-hand of all.

The ruffed grouse love such places, as they

love the old logging roads and ancient trails. To merely walk through that grand corridor would be a treat for any lover of the world beautiful; but to walk through with gun at the ready and a grouse apt to spring any moment, to dart into the corridor and speed the length of it in full view, was — well, it was one of those higher walks of life so frequently mentioned in print, yet so seldom thoroughly enjoyed. That corridor used to be good for sometimes half a dozen birds, and in it, considering the beauty of the surroundings and everything, the writer enjoyed the finest grouse-shooting he has ever known. It had variety too, for now and then a wise bird would go boring up the height, or take a dive into the ravine and fall dead, away below, which, of course, meant a risky descent and a return climb worthy of a youthful politician, or a rib-nosed mandrill, or anything that aspires to climb.

In Michigan there is a region — the natives call it the " Popples." There the poplar brush is reasonable, and a man may get fair chances and many of them before the sun sinks below the black forest line. In other places most of the shooting must needs be done in the big woods, or about their borders. There is, or perhaps there was, one rare good bit where a slashing for

a county line, or a road, had been cut for miles through the woods. The trees had been felled so the tops lay together, which formed a continuous brush-pile sometimes for a mile at a stretch. At intervals the land fell away to low swampy expanses bearing much thicket. Along this line, especially when there were two guns, to cover both sides of the brush, the shooting used to be fine. Frequently one could see the grouse moving about under the brush, and fifty times a snap-shot camera might have "caught" the writer with gun in left hand and a club, or snowball, in the right, as he prepared to hurl in the missile to start some grouse which hesitated about leaving such excellent cover. To give an idea of the number of birds — one well-remembered day's bag was twenty-six and a few hares, to two guns. That day at least fifty birds were flushed, the peculiar cover saving about half of them.

The sport of the Red River Valley would be fine were it not for the nature of the cover, which, far north at least, is mainly long slim saplings, so closely crowded that free swinging of the gun is impossible. The writer is a quick shot and not awkward in brush, but the grouse of Manitoba have no great cause to regret his visits. "What you think about it?" he once asked a quaint old hunter who was guiding him in the

brush, and who openly yearned for chicken-shooting in the grass, and who still further had an exasperating habit of bawling, " Did-you-git-h-i-m ? " every time a miss occurred, and invariably keeping silent when the few kills were scored.

" Pretty good — what there is of it," said the old man, and when asked if there wasn't enough of it, he replied, " Oh, yes, there's a-plenty of it — such as it is." No bad description of the sport in these covers.

In British Columbia the sport, as found, could not compare with that of the East. Those who know the wonderful western province will readily guess why. In many places the trees almost rival the famous big conifers of California, and they are crowded together as thickly as it is possible for such mighty trunks to stand. Frequently the lower spaces are filled with ferns of such size and luxuriance as to suggest semitropic lands rather than a portion of Canada. In such cover the keenest of guns can do little or nothing. The writer is over six feet tall, but in that cover he felt like a veritable babe in the wood. The size of the firs was almost oppressive — but the ferns—ye gods ! such ferns. In places they grow like the big western corn, close and rank, towering a yard or more above one's head. If any of them come under the classification of " maiden-

hair," they certainly would suggest a lithesome wee maid of about the proportions of Goliath of Gath. Among them, grouse after grouse can buzz away unseen, while, in addition, the tremendous fronds combine to form a most baffling light.

Western Ontario need not be dwelt upon. The country is very level, the best grounds being moderately open woods, ordinary thickets, brier patches, and the brushy beds of dry creeks. In the greater part of this cover a quick, good shot should gather half his birds early in the season, and do better than that after the leaves are down. As a whole it is a reasonably fair country.

In Pennsylvania, however, things are somewhat different; in fact the mountainous portions of that state, much of it good grouse country too, will tax a man's strength, wind, and skill to the limit. Very frequently the birds will be found high up steep hillsides, and when flushed in such places they are apt to go plunging down to the bottom of the valleys at an astounding rate. Now, a grouse going downhill moves as if possessed of a devil, and it does things not at all calculated to shorten its life. To a man who has slowly climbed the Blue Ridge, who has reached the top half winded, and acquired a sneaking suspicion that the sporting fixture of the day is not strictly on

the level, the ruffed rascal is a startling menace against the pure joy of the great subsequent.

What he will see probably will resemble a brown streak which curves over the rim of the height and fairly sizzles valleyward in a peculiar zigzagging, downward boring, which he is apt to hope will result fatally, yet which seldom does. To swing a gun three ways at once is a serious task for ordinary hands — in the writer's opinion a man-of-war with all hands busy couldn't do it — yet the hill-grouse of Pennsylvania will unblushingly ask a newcomer to do this very thing. And when a bird of chance flies into the hail of lead, one's triumph is too brief to talk about. When you hit one, you hit it fair, and the jar lifts it just enough to send it clear of everything, down and down till it fetches up either in some impetuous and thoughtless trout-stream which will rush it a mile away before you can clamber down to where it fell, or else it will land in some Dutchman's field which is "posted." Then you have to go home and learn Dutch before you can explain to the owner of the land why you are trespassing, and when you get back the late owner's grandson is working the farm, and he insists that all claims against the estate were settled by his father years before he died.

Or if, as sometimes happens, you actually gather the bird before it gets too high, you look

up at the serene brow of the hill and start to register a vow that it would be sacrilege to re-invade that lofty, holy calm. Before you are half through registering, you suddenly remember that the lunch is up there, alongside of a spring, that the flask is cooling in the limpid depths. Then a friendly Dutchman appears, greets you pleasantly, and tells you there are plenty of grouse up there, adding as an inducement, that you can see ever so far south, the great storied ground — the battle-fields. Surely you want to see the battlefields? If you don't kill him on the spot, you look him squarely in the eye and in the smooth, convincing tone of a steamboat's siren you say: "No, sir! I don't want to see any battlefields — War — is — hel-l-l-l!"

Of course all Pennsylvania isn't on edge. There are noble valleys and grand interspaces, but the higher form of sport quite naturally is on top of the hills. A chemical analysis of the writer's record there might read: lead, in paying quantities; saltpetre, abundant; language, rich; slaughter, a trace.

SABINE'S GROUSE

(*B. u. sabini*)

Adult male and female — Upper parts, mostly dark, rusty chestnut, with black mottling; rump and upper tail-coverts grayish in many specimens; flanks, rusty, barred with black; tail, deep rust color, with irregular black bars, and tipped with gray; sub-

terminal band, black, with bar of gray above; under tail-coverts, orange, barred with black and V-shaped white mark at tip; feathers of thigh, brownish. Total length, about 17½ inches; wings, 7½; tail, 6½. Habitat — Coast range of mountains, from northern British Columbia to California.

As will be noticed in the measurements, Sabine's, or the Oregon grouse, is a trifle larger than its better-known relation of the East. To give honor where 'tis due, this bird is also the handsomest of all ruffed grouse, the rich, reddish tone of its plumage being warmer and more pleasing than the grayish cast of the other. I have shot this bird at a dozen or more points in British Columbia, and found its habits to be the same as those of its relatives of seldom-disturbed sections of Maine and the Canadian provinces. The food consists of insects, seeds, berries, leaves, and buds. It is, as a rule, excellent eating, but occasionally the flesh has an unpleasant flavor owing to some special diet. The nest, eggs, and young resemble those of *B. umbellus*. Owing to the nature of the cover of the west coast, Sabine's grouse seldom affords much sport, the majority of the birds which reach the table being trapped.

THE CANADIAN RUFFED GROUSE
(*B. u. togata*)

While our highest scientific authorities have agreed to consider this bird a subspecies of the

ruffed grouse, the writer confesses his inability to distinguish between the two birds, either by a grayer cast of plumage, measurements, or for that matter by any reliable marking or lack of marking. He has shot hundreds of them, all told, which were natives of every Canadian province except one, and he could no more swear to their identity as *B. u. togata*, as distinct from *B. umbellus*, than he could swear how many times they had been missed before he happened to hold on the right spot. An open confession is good for the soul, and he will further confess that he believes the shrewdest bird-sharp of them all couldn't tell which from tother, not even if he first picked them feather by feather and then ate them at his scientific ease.

As chief magistrate *pro tem.*, I have sentenced grouse to be shot, hung, drawn (both ways), and quartered (halved is better as it insures a squarer deal in the matter of dressing); I have bagged "smoky tufts," black tufts, brown tufts, and no tufts; gray tails, grayish brown tails, and reddish brown tails; I have had all but one of them in the same bag, and killed a brown tail with one barrel and a gray tail with the other; and after a careful consideration of the case my decision is, "The ruffed grouse is subject to considerable variation in plumage, said variation not being thoroughly understood by this or any other court."

THE GRAY RUFFED GROUSE

(*B. u. umbelloides*)

In the Rocky Mountain region, from Colorado, through western Dakota, Montana, Idaho, and British Columbia, to the Yukon valley in Alaska, is found this subspecies of the ruffed grouse. It may readily be distinguished from *B. umbellus* by its smaller size and the pronounced grayness of the ground color of the plumage. While it appears to prefer the dense cover of the banks of streams and slight elevations, it has been taken far up the sides of the loftiest peaks — as high as nine or ten thousand feet. Its favorite food is the buds of the spruce, which impart to the flesh a flavor which might appeal to the palate of an eastern spruce gum chewer, but which signally fails to hold the appreciative attention of an epicure, unless he also happens to be a lost prospector keen for a "grub-stake." The average length of this bird is about $14\frac{1}{2}$ inches; wing $7\frac{1}{4}$; tail, 6.

I have never shot this bird. The few specimens which I have seen and handled in the flesh were brought aboard the tug upon which, with friends interested in timber, I penetrated some of the fiord-like sections of the northern coast of British Columbia.

THE DUSKY GROUSE

(*Dendragapus obscurus*)

Adult male — Forehead, dull rufous; back of head, brownish black, with rusty markings, or all slate color; back of neck and upper parts, a mixture of blackish brown, lighter brown, and gray, frequently mottled; scapulars streaked with white along shafts; white space on sides of neck; throat, white with black mottlings; sides of head, black; lower parts, slate color, flanks mottled with brown, the feathers streaked on shafts and tipped with white; under tail-coverts, blackish brown, showing gray barring, blackish mottling and bordering and white tips; tail, rounded, black, ending in broad gray band; primaries, dark brown, outer webs and tips mottled with gray; legs covered to toes with pale brown feathers; bill, horn color. Total length, about 20 inches; wing, about $9\frac{1}{2}$; tail, 8; tarsus, $1\frac{3}{4}$.

Adult female — Upper parts, mottled with black and buff; feathers usually tipped with white; wings, grayish brown, barred and mottled with buff, streaked and tipped with white; primaries, dark brown; throat, buff; sides and front of neck and chest, dark rusty gray with buffy white bars and tips; rest of under parts, slate, the flank-feathers with black and buff mottlings and white tips; central tail-feathers, blackish brown, with grayish brown bars mottled with black; rest of tail, black, with slight gray mottlings, and ending in gray band. Total length, about 17 inches; wing, about $8\frac{3}{4}$; tail, 6. Habitat — Rocky Mountains from southern Idaho, Montana, and western South Dakota to New Mexico and Arizona.

This grand species is, with the single exception of the big cock-of-the-plains, the largest and at the same time one of the finest of American grouse. It delights in dense, elevated forests, ranging upward from about two thousand feet to the timber line. Among western sportsmen it is termed the "blue," or "gray," grouse, and

those who have enjoyed the pleasure of shooting and later eating it have yet to be heard from in the line of adverse criticism. Its sole fault as a game bird consists in its seldom being found in cover which affords a fair chance to the gun. In fact, it is such an inveterate lover of trees that it takes to the branches as naturally as a duck takes to water. Like the ruffed grouse, it will tree, and remain motionless until it fancies it has been observed; then it at once departs with a sounding rush, which may only be stopped by the quickest and most skilled of shots. I have flushed it when it seemed to do hardly anything more than leap from the ground to a convenient limb, and more than once, while seeking to trim off its head, it has left the perch so suddenly that the gun could not be shifted in time to prevent the wasting of a shell — and this little joke at the expense of a notoriously quick shot. Could this grouse be induced to take to what in the case of ruffed grouse would be fair cover, it would furnish sport not surpassed by any of its family.

Only those familiar with the western cover can understand how easy it is to fail to bag at short range a bird about as large as a common barnyard hen — to be accurate, of between three and three and one-half pounds' weight. The tenderfoot would imagine such a bird, rising close at hand, to be an easy, perhaps too easy, mark.

Let the tenderfoot climb the steeps and try a few blue grouse as they leave the trees, and his song may take on an undertone suggestive of blasted hopes and trust betrayed. In the first place, the cover usually is standing timber big enough to stop a locomotive, to say nothing of small shot. This timber, as I found it, is about as close as it can stand, thereby forming something closely akin to a gigantic stockade with extremely narrow interspaces. Imagine a picket fence enlarged to Titanic proportions with a swift bird whizzing along one side, while from the other side the gun strove to stop him as he crossed the gaps. Such a fence would have a deal more picket than gap, and a series of kills would represent a heap more luck than good management on the part of the shooter. Shooting through such an obstacle would mean that when the bird was visible the gun would, or should, be just ahead and swinging at equal speed, which would further mean that the trigger would have to be pulled either while the bird was invisible or while the gun was squarely on a picket — a somewhat bitter experience has proved that almost invariably the gun was on the picket, and that the picket was some feet thick and utterly unreasonable.

This grouse also is most difficult to locate even when perched upon a limb only a few yards away. In its native woods the light is baffling and there

is a confusion of shade, amid which the general slaty tone of the plumage is barely distinguishable. A coat of feathers especially designed with a view to protective coloration could not better serve the purpose, and the bird appears to be perfectly aware of this. Indeed, its habit of trusting to its trick of treeing and remaining motionless has earned for it the name of "fool-grouse," which I believe should be applied only to *young* birds. These unquestionably will tree and foolishly maintain their positions while their comrades are being shot or clubbed down, but the older birds, except in seldom disturbed localities, are wiser.

But fool grouse or no, when once the bird concludes to start there is no more foolishness. With a nerve-shaking whirring it promptly gets to top speed, and usually darts downhill, a manœuvre which greatly adds to the difficulty of the shot. When taking wing it cackles like a scared fowl.

In spite of the bird's penchant for timber it frequently is found in the open and in grain fields. In such places the sportsman may enjoy "blue grouse" shooting as it should be, and sport of a very high order. Then the full strength and speed of the game becomes apparent, and the man who makes uniformly good scores has no reason to fear any ordinary company. I recall several truly delightful experiences, which, even to a gun

"thoroughly broke" on ruffed grouse and quail in the heavy cover of the East, proved none too easy.

The love-making of the male is marked by all the pomp and vanity of the strutting gobbler; indeed, in his actions he might pass for a turkey bantam, but he has one marked peculiarity. It is his habit to perch in some thick-growing tree, and by filling the sacs upon his neck with air and abruptly expelling it, to produce a low booming, which has an extraordinary carrying and ventriloquial power. This booming, or "booing," as some westerners term it, seldom fails to sorely puzzle a tenderfoot, the baffling feature of it being that it does not appear to gain volume or distinctness when the bird is closely approached. Even a veteran blue grouse hunter will hesitate over saying how far a booming grouse is distant.

The male, while a valiant cavalier during the period of love-making, — May, or early in June, according to the elevation of the range, — does not trouble himself about the welfare of the young, which are carefully tended by the mother. The nest is a hollow scratched in the ground and partially lined with grass or other soft material. The number of eggs varies, seven or eight being the average. Occasionally, about twice the usual number are found, which would suggest the possibility of their having been deposited by two

hens. The color of the eggs varies from pale to a decided buff with darker spots. The most common site for the nest is alongside a log, but the birds exercise little art either in building or concealing it. The period of incubation is about twenty-one days, the young running as soon as they are dry. They are prettily marked above with light and dark buff, the under parts light. Like the young of the ruffed grouse, they are adepts at hiding. When sufficiently grown to flutter to the lower branches of a tree, they adopt the treeing habit, and from that time on behave as do their elders.

The dusky grouse feeds upon the foliage of certain plants, berries, grasshoppers, and a variety of other insects, grain, grubs, and worms. During the period of deep snow, and snow is astonishingly deep in some of its haunts, it sustains itself upon the buds of conifers.

THE SOOTY GROUSE

(*D. o. fuliginosus*)

Only an expert could distinguish this race of the preceding species. The plumage is several shades darker, but all important markings are about the same. It is found through the mountains from California to Alaska. The habits, nesting, young, and food resemble those of *D. obscurus*.

RICHARDSON'S GROUSE
(*D. o. richardsoni*)

The chief difference between this race and *D. obscurus* is found in the tail, which in Richardson's grouse is square at the tip and lacking the conspicuous gray band. It, too, is a mountain dweller, being found along the eastern slopes of the Rockies from central Montana northward through the mountain region of Canada, and has no peculiarities of habits to distinguish it from its near relatives.

THE CANADA GROUSE
(*Canachites canadensis*)

Adult male — Upper parts, gray, barred with black; wings, lighter gray mottled and barred with black, and brown tips; scapulars, with central white streaks, widening at tips; under parts, black, with border of mixed black and white to the throat, many of the feathers tipped with white; flanks, pale brown, with irregular, longitudinal black lines, and white streaks along the shafts, broadening at the tips; under tail-coverts, black, tipped with white; upper tail-coverts, black, mottled with brown and tipped with gray. Bill, black. Total length, about 14½ inches; wing, 7; tail, 5.

Adult female — Upper parts, barred with gray, buff, and black, the gray most conspicuous on lower back and rump; sides of breast and flanks, strongly tinged with buff; flank-feathers, with central streak of white, broadening at tips. Abdomen, black, feathers tipped with white; under tail-coverts, black, barred with buff, and tipped with white; median tail-feathers, barred with buff and black; remainder, black, with irregular, narrow, buffish lines and tipped with same color. No noticeable difference in the size of the sexes. The downy young are yellow with dark markings above. A black line through the eye to the nape.

An exceedingly pretty, but, from the sporting point of view, a practically useless bird. It is found throughout most of the forested regions of Canada, from the Atlantic to the eastern slopes of the Rockies, thence northward to the vicinity of Kadiak, Alaska; and also through the northern portions of the northern tier of states to the Rockies. It prefers dense growths of spruce and fir, and swamps of tamarack. It is a hardy bird, but so gentle and confiding as to appear stupid. It is usually seen in small companies, as if one brood, and is common in the vicinity of the old portages and trails made by the lumberman and fur-trader. The writer has twice caught mature specimens with his bare hands, and it is a common trick of woodsmen to decapitate a bird with a switch, or noose it with a bit of twine. Once the writer came precious near hooking one with a trout fly, at which the grouse had pecked. Only a dislike to needless cruelty, and a respect for a fine rod, saved this particular bird. Quite often the brood is met with in the trail, when they will sedately step aside about sufficiently far to make room for the intruder's boots, meanwhile regarding him with a laughable air of affectionate interest. No doubt this grouse could fly rapidly should it choose to exert its powers, but it is content with more leisurely movements. The flesh is very dark, and even when at its best is fit only for a hungry

man. In the winter it is bitter, and entirely unworthy of a place upon the table. Some people claim to like it, but tastes are bound to differ. In my opinion this grouse should never be shot, but suffered to live out its gentle life in the grim old woods, to which its presence lends the touch of life too seldom seen.

Its courtship presents some peculiarities which cannot fail to interest the intelligent spectator. The male struts as proudly as the grandest gobbler of barnyard or forest; his red combs show erect and swollen, and he seems all puffed up with pride and passion. Suddenly he leaps into the air with wings whirring like electric fans, and for a moment or two hovers as though fixed to the spot, then slowly lowers himself. The sound of the wings when he is thus engaged may be heard at a considerable distance, but, like the whirring of the true pheasant, it is ventriloquial, and difficult to locate. The nest consists of a few leaves and light stuff arranged with little care, frequently in the shelter of a thick spruce. The number of eggs varies from eight to about a dozen. The ground color is buff, with irregular brownish marks. Only one brood is raised in a season. The young behave like other youthful grouse, and the mother displays an obstinate devotion seldom equalled, bustling about one's feet, and almost attacking in her nervous anxiety to draw the peril toward herself.

FRANKLIN'S GROUSE
(*C. franklini*)

The distinguishing marks of this species are the broad, white bars at the end of the upper tail-coverts. It is also a trifle larger than *C. canadensis*, which it otherwise closely resembles. Its range includes the Rocky Mountains from northwestern Montana, through Oregon and Washington and the Coast Range of British Columbia to Alaska. It prefers high elevations, usually between five and ten thousand feet. In disposition it is even more fearless and confiding than its relative of the East. As an object of the sportsman's interest, it is absolutely without merit.

THE PRAIRIE-HEN
(*Tympanuchus americanus*)

Adult male — Upper parts, brown, barred with black and buff; wing-feathers tipped with buff; a tuft of stiff, elongated feathers, capable of being elevated over the head on either side of the neck, black, with buff centres, frequently chestnut on inner webs; chin, throat, and cheeks, buff, the latter marked with dark brown spots; a brown line from mouth, beneath the eye, to ear-coverts; buff stripe from maxilla to and beyond the eye; under parts, white, barred with brown; flanks, barred with dark brown and buff; under tail-coverts, white, margined with brown and buff; tail, brown, tipped with white; large sacs of loose skin beneath the long neck-feathers. Total length, about 18 inches; wing, 9; tail, 4¼. The female is like the male, but a trifle smaller, and the neck-tufts are very short. She has no sacs on the neck. The downy young are light buff, with darker

markings on head and upper parts. Range — Prairies of Mississippi Valley from Manitoba to Ontario, Michigan, and Ohio, west to the Dakotas, Kansas, and Indian Territory, south to Louisiana and Texas.

Of all the grouse family, this bird — the "chicken" of shooting lore — probably yields the most complete satisfaction to the great army of American sportsmen. Its greatest rival is the famed red bird of the moors over sea, but if the question of all-round merit were left to popular vote, beyond all doubt the "chicken" would poll an overwhelming majority. Nor is this to be wondered at, for unquestionably it is *the* bird of the people.

Were the cleverest sportsman who ever lived to undertake the designing of a bird of habitat and habits to suit the wishes of perhaps three-fourths of the gunners of this country, the result of his labor surely would be something very like a chicken. Let us glance at its qualifications: it is of good size, carrying plenty of wholesome and excellent meat; its appearance is pleasing; it is vigorous and prolific; it is a useful friend to the farmer; and it loves a region of pure air and pleasant sunshine, wherein an overworked man may find a cure-all for his mental worry and resultant ills; its ranges may be reached in comfort and traversed with pleasure; it behaves well before dogs; it gives the gun a fair, open chance, seldom being found in anything like really diffi-

cult cover; and, perhaps best of all, it offers a comparatively easy mark early in the season when the guns are apt to be out of form, with increasing difficulties as the season advances, when the guns should be doing better, while near the close of the season it will thoroughly test the skill and resourcefulness of the deadliest of the masters of the shotgun. Lives there another game bird of which as much may be truly said? And this is not all, for the big, generous chicken goes even farther and extends an invitation to the lame, the halt, and — I came pretty near saying the blind! Come to think of it, the chicken might welcome the blind — nay! even prefer them — but that doesn't matter. Lest these rather sweeping statements should be misunderstood, it is pardonable to explain that (providing what's left of him be all right) a one-armed, one-legged, or no-legged man may enjoy his chicken-shooting with the best of them. The western prairies have their fine shots who are maimed in all three ways, for the chicken may be shot from either the saddle, or any suitable wheeled conveyance, without any need for the gunner to move from his seat. Shooting from the saddle is a method which is common in both West and South, but only the prairie in some form can offer reliable sport to the man on wheels.

The prairie-hen, now inseparably associated

with the country of magnificent open plains, was not always confined to its present ranges. There is no reason to doubt that it was once very abundant much farther east than its present limit, and it is more than probable that in the old days the birds favored tracts of open woodlands. Like the quail, the "chicken" follows the plough, which accounts for the gradual extension of its range westward, while the narrowing of the eastward limit is readily explained by the increased number of guns and other destructive agencies. In most of its present haunts the bird may be considered a resident, yet there is somewhat of a drifting movement southward from the extreme northern grounds, which occasionally amounts to what might be termed a partial migration. Strangely enough, this southward movement appears to be confined chiefly to the females, the great majority of the males sticking to their native ranges in spite of furious storms and arctic temperature.

Few of those at all familiar with the prairies have failed to notice the love-making—the peculiar booming and ridiculous antics of the males of this species, which are so characteristic of the first few days of early spring. The low, booming sound carries far through the still gray atmosphere of earliest dawn, and when, as usually happens, a lot of old males have assembled upon some slightly rising ground, they make a row

which would do credit to a host of gigantic bull-frogs.

When I first heard this booming, it sorely puzzled me. It was in western Ontario, on what is known as Raleigh plains — an extensive tract of low, marshy land, lying for miles along the south bank of the Thames River. During early spring this tract was flooded with the exception of a limited central area of less than one hundred acres in extent. Spring shooting of geese, duck, and snipe was then both legal and amazingly good, guns were comparatively few, and the plains formed something very like an earthly Eden for those sufficiently game to face astounding mud and ice-cold water. To get out before gray dawn, to occupy some trifling "hide," and there await the morning flight of waterfowl, was the proper caper. This frequently was wet, dirty work, but the shooting was grand, so discomfort was cheerfully endured. Just before sunrise, from the higher part of the plains there invariably came a mysterious sound — "Boo-rum-roo-boo-rum-roo" often repeated. I had then never seen a live prairie-hen, nor had the older local gunners, and the booming sound troubled me much. It was easily imitated, and one day I spoke of it to three red-faced old rascals of the genuine old sporting school.

"What's it like?" growled one, who hated troublesome boys as he hated his Satanic majesty.

The unfortunate writer voiced a good imitation of the strange sound.

"Why, you d——d young fool — that's a *bull-frog!*" roared the old cock, making a wrathful pass with his cane. But the writer was agile, and he fled abashed. The next time he heard the sound, he deliberately forfeited all chance for waterfowl by wading directly across the marsh through water and mud frequently up to his waist. The sound led him on and on, until at last he descried a large fowl-like bird upon a knoll, and traced the sound to it. When the bird flushed, he didn't know what it was, so he shot at it, and greatly to his regret it proved to be a fine male pinnated grouse, or prairie-hen. He stuffed the bird, and it is still in his possession, and although he has since killed hundreds — perhaps thousands might be nearer the mark — he has yet to see a finer specimen. Later developments proved the old male to have had company, to be exact, upon the plains in question, and upon another similar expanse a few miles away, there were years later as many as seventy-five or one hundred "chickens." Possibly a few of their descendants still survive.

But to see the chicken at home, one should go to the Dakotas, Minnesota, or Manitoba, or one of the good western grounds. The observer, who should be equipped with a powerful glass, may

there study birds at his leisure, and learn much of their curious ways during the love-making season. Then the old males are full of fire, and their booming comes to the ear like the muffled lowing of distant herds of cattle. Through the glass one can follow every move of the assembled males, note the absurd posturing of love's minuet, the frenzied strutting, and the often furious fighting. The male has upon either side of his neck a yellow sac, which roughly resembles the half of an orange. These he can inflate to an enormous size, and collapse them at will, and during the emptying of these sacs is produced the booming sound. While strutting the bird presents an extraordinary appearance. The sacs are inflated until they suggest the rubber bladder toy of the children; the bird's head almost disappears between them, while their tremendous enlargement forces forward the long winglike feathers of the neck until they project above the head almost to the point of meeting. With the sacs fully inflated, the neck appears to be as large as the body, while the hornlike projected feathers lend an uncanny effect which, to say the least, is startling, if not rather devilish. The short tail, fully spread, is raised fanlike above the back, while the wings are lowered like those of a strutting gobbler until the primaries scrape the ground. The strutting is, of course, intended to impress the onlook-

ing females with the idea that each male is a devil of a fellow, and a most desirable *parti*. The various movements embrace a series of posturings varied with abrupt, short rushes this way and that. Every now and then a male lowers his head and expels the air from his sacs, and the booming sound speeds over the great grassy sea, as the voice of white-maned breakers comes from the distant reef. I have lain watching and listening while one hundred or more were thus engaged, and the experience was well worth the trouble of beating the sun across the grass. The grand concert is always about sunrise, but scattered birds may be heard at any time during the day.

The big musterings are continued each morning for about a week, and toward the end the man with the glass may enjoy a surfeit of impromptu fights, for the jealous males mill it right merrily as though they considered their meeting-place an exaggerated cockpit. They fight with feet, wings, and bills; pecking savagely, hanging on, and leaping and striking somewhat after the manner of their remote kin — the wearers of the deadly gaffs. When one feels that he has been sufficiently mauled, he "flies the pit," and unless he has luck in running across some lone maid, or some mated male who either is a poor fighter or will submit to a bluff, he wins no mate that sea-

son. These lone males are termed by the plainsmen "old solitaries," and they are apt to prove wary and afford long-range single chances when the shooting season comes. It is to be hoped that they "get into the game again" the following spring, but naturally this is a difficult matter to prove, with the probabilities in favor of another attempt.

Once mated, the pairs scatter far and wide, nesting wherever they find suitable sites, such as a thick clump of grass or weeds. The nest is merely a slight depression lined with grass and a few feathers. The eggs vary considerably both in ground, color, and markings, the usual type being pale brown freckled with reddish brown. They are hatched in about twenty-five days, the period of incubation being irregular, perhaps slightly influenced by the weather. The number of eggs varies greatly, as many as twenty having been found, although the average would appear to be about a dozen. Should a nest be destroyed, especially before the completion of the laying, the hen will build anew and proceed to business. In such cases the number of eggs is apt to be somewhat below the average. So soon as the hen begins to brood, the male takes himself off, as though "the subsequent proceedings interested him no more."

The young run as soon as they are dry, and the

nest has no further attraction for them, the mother covering them wherever the close of the day finds them; but as they are given to hanging about some spot where food is abundant, they may be found for days in succession on this favorite ground. The hen is an excellent mother, giving warning at the first sign of danger and feigning lameness to attract the intruder to herself. The wee chicks are swift of foot and clever at hiding, and the discovery of them in the open by no means implies the capture of even one. The first food of the chicks is insects of various kinds, the main course being grasshoppers. In this purely insectivorous stage the birds perform a distinct service the value of which must be considerable. Later on, the diet is varied with seeds, berries, and grain, wherever the latter is to be had.

By the middle of August, in average seasons, the young look large when they flush, but they are still soft and comparatively weak of wing. By the first of September, however, the majority of them are strong enough to afford the best of shooting, and they are then extremely good eating. The flesh is then white, but it darkens as the bird ages. A peculiarity of it is that it does not improve with hanging. Experienced chicken shooters know this, and they never hesitate over eating a bird within a few hours of its death. Upon rising the chicken clucks gruffly and speeds

away, usually in a straight line a few feet above the grass. The flush is accompanied by a vigorous whirring, the flight being marked by periods of rapid wing-beats alternating with gliding upon set pinions, not unlike the flight of the meadow-lark. Early in the season the birds lie like stones, frequently in thick cover, waiting until almost trodden upon. The flush almost invariably is straggling, the birds getting up singly, and by twos and threes. The old hand knows this, and with an ejector gun and nimble fingers he frequently bags half a dozen in swift succession to the one point. Now and then an unusually quick man will bag an entire brood without leaving his tracks. This is *the* feat of chicken-shooting, and I never will forget one glorious day when, before the keen eyes of a remorseless critic and now famous writer, I dropped eleven singles and doubles, nor his frenzied roar of, "Kill her, ——you!" when the old hen, true to habit, flushed last and was luckily dropped full fifty yards away. That little incident was the beginning of a friendship which is worth more than all the game in North America, but it is now an old story.

Upon another occasion, in South Dakota, I was shooting in company with a quite celebrated trap-shot — peace be to his ashes! He wanted one hundred chickens to send East for some special purpose, and he declared that he would work the

dogs while the other fellow did the shooting. It was just at the prime of the season and birds were plentiful. The first day's bag was a heavy one, the second nearly as good, the third somewhat lighter, eleven chickens being required to complete the hundred. This was an easy task for the morning, so preparations were made for breaking camp.

"Never mind about shells, there's lots in the rig," he remarked, as we prepared to start. The dogs sailed away and soon found game, which flushed in the usual straggling fashion, and paid the usual penalty. A second lot was located and it yielded three. Finally the dogs pulled up beside a big strip of rank grass. "How many shells you got left?" queried the driver.

"Two in the gun and—one in the pocket," was the reply after a feel.

"Good—kill out," was the gruff rejoinder.

It was a simple task, for the birds had almost to be kicked out of the grass. As the third fell, to my amazement there was a roar from the buckboard, and what felt like a drunken gorilla fell upon me and bore me, face downward, into the grass, where I was mauled, as it was put, "Good and plenty." The cause of the asylum-suggestive demonstration proved to be the somewhat startling fact that the driver had been keeping tabs on the shells, and for the several trips the birds and

shells tallied. It was an extraordinary performance, which, needless to say, that gun has never duplicated either upon chickens or any other game.

That was chicken-shooting with everything in the gun's favor, but it did not represent the best of the sport, which can only be enjoyed during those occasional warm, windless, sleepy spells which come later, and which are so strongly suggestive of the genuine Indian summer of the East. Then the fully matured birds lie like dead things, but rise swift and strong and go whizzing away on what surely will prove very long flights unless the lead prevents. Then is the time when a man can perhaps kill his twenty odd in succession, yet feel that every kill is an individual triumph of manly skill, for the range with a quick man must needs be short, and the work clean, be it hit or miss. Quite often birds will lie closer than is desirable. In such cases an imitation of the sound of the whirring flush is apt to start near-lying individuals. The sound of the voice also startles them, hence, when a nice lot of birds are down in good cover, it is well to avoid speaking to dog or comrades.

Where the country comprises a mingling of cover and small prairies, as in some of the best parts of Wisconsin, the chickens after the first flush make for the wooded or brushy hillsides which are almost invariably within easy flight. Much of the timber of these hillsides is small

oak, and the general appearance is parklike. On such ground the shooting is excellent, there being just enough trees to keep a man keen and careful. Many other places present a snarl of low scrub-oak and hazels, seldom more than waist-high. In such cover the chickens lie like quail, and a good shot can walk them up singly and drop bird after bird till his coat can hold no more — then hey! for the following wagon, to deposit therein the slain, and to resume the beat till the coat is again too heavy for comfort.

Days on these small Wisconsin prairies leave enduring memories. It is quite true that the number of birds and the possible bags could never rival the possibilities of the mighty grass-lands farther west, yet a gun could stop from a dozen to three times that number of birds during a day of hard work, and could a sportsman desire more? Your true sportsman is an artist, not a butcher; and amid the billowy hills of Wisconsin he may feast his eyes upon a grand succession of vistas, steeps of purpling oaks, ravines of golden poplars, and sweet intervales of snug homes lying amid well-tended fields, which delightfully serve to sharpen the wild beauty of the background, which remains as it has ever been.

And they will not all be chickens, those birds which Nimrod lovingly smooths and counts at nightfall, when the tang gets into the air and the

crimson pales behind the dusky hills. The ruffed grouse whirls the painted leaves as his swift fans thrill the silence; small Bob, too, rouses mimic thunders as he rips the dappled sunshine with tiny might; and now and then, e'en to this day, a swift gray arrow cleaves the still, sweet air and strikes its target of glowing foliage. The thought that this lone arrow may be the last of all those myriad flights which once assailed these lichened keeps and vine-hung battlements, should quench the war-spark in the eye and slacken the ready finger just in time, for the pigeon is too rare for one to be destroyed.

The great plains, while lacking the beauty of foliage and picturesque irregularities of Wisconsin, yet possess a charm peculiarly their own — a breadth and power, somewhat like that of the ocean, which gives a sense of freedom and daring to whoever trails far out and sees the dim blue of distant forests rimming like fading shores the huge, halted billows of grass. To camp night after night amid sweet grass, to trail day after day over a silent expanse, where nature never sounds a discordant note, to toil until weary of a fascinating task, to eat when hungry, and to sleep till thoroughly rested and refreshed, is no bad medicine for a man whose nerves may have been racked by the ceaseless throb and jar of some busy city. And there is another, which to many

is by far the more attractive way, viz., to secure a properly appointed car and have it side-tracked somewhere where the game is abundant, and, with the car as a home upon wheels, to shoot in every direction until a change may be desired and the car be hauled to the chosen point.

This is the wiser plan for the latter part of the season, for the car is better than any temporary camp can possibly be made. With it, a party of good fellows may have a royal time without forfeiting one of those creature comforts which, after all has been said, are not characteristic of camps, yet which go so far toward impressing a man with the idea that life really is worth living. Given such an outfit, and with birds wilder and stronger of wing, as they are bound to prove as the season advances, and the man who cannot enjoy himself probably is one of those fellows who would come out nights and "kick" because his grave wasn't properly aired and lighted, or who would want to go right back because the celestial pavement wasn't built of the particular brand of gold brick which he had handled in Jersey.

As the end of the season approaches, sometimes earlier, if an unseasonable chilly period arrives, the scattered broods unite and form packs, which frequently contain hundreds of birds. They are then entirely too wild to be

depended upon for sport with the gun, although an occasional warm spell may cause a good day. A pack will seldom allow a man to approach within anything like shotgun range, and, if flushed, it rises with an astounding roar of wings and streams away at an electric clip for perhaps a mile, or more. To follow is well-nigh useless, for the birds will not lie, and the pursuer may rest assured that a lot of keen eyes are following his every movement. Under such conditions it is possible to have a bit of sport with a rifle of medium calibre, and this is not to be despised by the energetic man who craves a hard, health-giving tramp and who can content himself with a brace or so of birds. Quite often it is possible to get fair chances at from fifty to seventy-five yards, when the man possessed of that rare gift — the power to correctly estimate distance on the plains — and the skill to put his lead where he wants it, may kill enough birds to keep his interest from waning.

The best dog for chicken-shooting is the best dog for any form of upland shooting, *i.e.* a thoroughly broken pointer or setter. Both breeds have stanch admirers, who do not hesitate to claim a marked superiority for their favorite. In my opinion, and I have had much to do with both dogs, there is no perceptible difference in the quality of the actual field work. To any one but

a pronounced advocate of the pointer, the setter is a far handsomer and frequently a more intelligent animal, which, as a rule, makes it the more desirable companion, especially during the close season. My preference is for the pointer, because of his more uniform steadiness upon scant work, and his ability to stand hard work during warm weather without continually requiring water. This upon the plains is no unimportant matter, for in many sections good water in abundance is not readily obtainable, which means that wise men will carry a full keg lashed to the rig wherever they go. The chief disadvantage of the pointer is that he rarely has sufficient coat to properly protect his hide from the sharp, coarse grass, while his almost hairless feet are liable to injury from continuous work in stiff, new-cut stubble. In point of fact the weakness of one dog is the strength of the other; hence, the setter, being the better protected all round, can better stand the wear and tear, while his rival, owing to his lack of protective coat, is less liable to overheating and its continuous thirst. Under reasonably fair conditions, the dogs are equal in speed, range, nose, staying powers and "bird-sense."

Be the dog of either breed, to win renown upon the prairie he needs *must* be a free, wide, fast ranger and a determined worker, not afraid to

go a mile, if need require, from his handler, and sufficiently stanch to hold his point without a waver, although many minutes should elapse before reënforcements arrive. A dog of fine nose and intelligence, if possessed of the other qualifications, is a treasure beyond price. The trouble with eastern-broken dogs when they first attempt prairie work is that the ground is too vast for them. Unaccustomed as they are to an apparently limitless scope of novel cover with never a fence or bit of brush to catch their eye and draw them on, they are apt to at first feel somewhat dazed by the seemingly hopeless prospect before them. Nor is this to be wondered at, for not seldom the man, too, feels how small is the chance of striking the right spot in all that sea of space. But a good dog is good anywhere, and presently, after he has enjoyed his initial whiff of the rich new scent, he will go striding away at that regular, determined, all-day-got-to-find-'em-at-last gait which is the hall-mark of a good one broken on the plains.

The deadliest foes of the prairie-hen, ranked in order of destructiveness, are: man, as sportsman, lighter of fires, farmer, and as trapper; the weather, as snow, cold, and rain; the beasts and birds of prey — wolves, foxes, skunks, and hawks and snakes. Dismissing the ravages by weather, of which excessive rain, by reason of its flooding

THE PRAIRIE CHICKEN

(Pinnated Grouse)

the nests and killing the young, causes by far the greatest damage, man is responsible for the really heavy mortality. If all the chickens which annually fall victims to the legitimate use of the gun could be piled in one heap, the mountain of meat would be quite large enough to make most people gasp in amazement. Yet so productive are the birds, and so broad their yet available ranges, that with rational game laws, rigidly enforced, the sport they afford might be indefinitely prolonged. Unfortunately, too many men are slow to understand the necessity for only killing in reason and in season. In far too many instances the man who abides by the law and fares forth upon the first lawful day finds that some sneaking ruffian has been over the ground in advance of the legitimate hour. Nor must it be imagined that only the needy poacher or the merciless market hunter is to blame. To their shame be it said that a host of well-to-do and apparently respectable citizens appear to look upon a game law as though they imagined it to be a sort of legal sieve, expressly designed for something to be strained through it. Just why some men, who perhaps would spend their last blood in resenting an open attack upon their honor, can sink to the level of a sneak thief when it comes to a question of obeying a game law, I am unable to fathom. They can well afford to wait, they cannot truth-

fully plead either ignorance or necessity, yet when the test comes they are as rotten as the stinking birds which foul their lawless trail, for they never durst take home their game. It is my misfortune to have met some of these men, to have heard their smug boastings of how in their small rascality they evaded this game warden, or tipped (bribed is the proper word) that one; and the boasters never appeared to realize how truly their own testimony damned them in the opinion of sportsmen of the True Blue Lodge, which, like that other great Lodge, sternly holds each brother to the leal, the fair, and the clean. Perhaps better things are coming. Peradventure a broader realization of what constitutes true sportsmanship may yet eradicate that disease known as illegal shooting. 'Twill be better so! I have seen that disease break out within the supposed to be sacred circles of Drug and Bench and Bar and Pen and Sword — yea! even in the Church — and I have marvelled at the mote detectors who saw not the beam they bore.

The prairie fires are mainly due to the bucolic custom of firing the grass in the spring. Other fires are caused by sparks from engines, and a few by sheer carelessness on the part of some smoker or rubbish burner. So far as the farmers are concerned, they might better burn their grass in the fall and avoid spoiling eggs. In

these days, with men ready to pay well for good shooting, a wise farmer can make his chicken crop quite a profitable item — certainly one well worth taking care of. If grass has to be burnt, it should be late in the fall. This means a better growth next season and without any particular damage. The other fires come under the head of accidents which will continue as long as mortals remain careless and engines are allowed to belch forth sparks.

In regard to trapping, little need be said. Vigorous, efficient game wardens will in time suppress much of it. In any event the writer has not the slightest intention of taking the chances of spreading possibly pernicious literature, by describing in detail the several forms of traps which he has found and kicked to flinders, or otherwise put out of commission. The other foes, furred, feathered, and scaled, will meet their end as settlement increases.

A MATCH AT CHICKENS

My second visit to the western club which had kindly extended the guest's privilege was productive of a big surprise. The colonel was in the library, and, as usual, was surrounded by a half-dozen grinning members, for the colonel was a character, and when he opened his mouth there were liberated words of huge wisdom and exceeding joy.

"There he is now!" exclaimed somebody, whereupon the colonel at once rose and, looking very wise, signed for me to follow him into a private room. He tapped the table, muttered "Sit down," and then took his stand directly in front. He was good to look at, the colonel was. Full six feet three, and powerfully built, he carried himself with that military back which some old warriors never lose. His long, snow-white hair, mustache, and imperial suggested the South, which was his home, while the keen black eyes and clean-cut, extraordinarily handsome features stamped him as one of F.F.V.'s. Nor did his appearance belie him, for the colonel was one of the genuine old fire-eating, high-bred lot.

"I've matched you, suh," he began, in a deep voice, "to shoot against young M—— in the field, any game recognized as such to count. It's to be a fa-ah, squa-ah, gentlemanly contest, and the best man is to win. Have I done right, suh? — I couldn't send you word."

"But, *Colonel*, —" I began, then hesitated, for his bronzed face was perceptibly flushing and the snowy mustache was beginning to bristle in an extraordinary manner.

"Well, suh? — Do you desiah to — to — *back out?*"

Something in the slight emphasis upon the final words was pregnant with unpleasant possi-

bilities, so the only thing left was to mutter something about every gentleman being entitled to a run for his money, and to assume a cheerfulness not caused by a chunk of ice down one's spine.

"Then it's a go — shake!" exclaimed the colonel, and he added, with truly majestic impressiveness: "By —— suh! we'll win! I have never yet made a match of my own seeking and lost, suh! It's only a dinnah for six gentlemen and a trifling side bit, but we'll win it. We'll show them that an Englishman is game off his own dunghill."

The crafty old devil slewed an eye round to see how the deliberately intended prod operated, then he smiled like the white-headed old reprobate he was. Some needful discussion followed, and suffice it to say that an early start the following morning was agreed upon.

"How you gunned?" he finally inquired, and I assured him that the gun was *all right*, which was true.

"Go get it — I always attend to detail, suh," he concluded.

When the case was opened and the gun put together and passed round for inspection, I could almost have laughed. The other party to the wager almost snatched at it, and it did not require his sly wink to a friend, or his ill-concealed satisfaction as he politely returned the gun, to tell that

he had fallen into a grievous error. Not so the colonel. He looked long and earnestly at the flawless finish, tried one lock close to his ear, glanced through the gleaming tubes, then laid it down without a word of comment. But there was the faintest of quivers of one eyelid which spoke volumes.

And well might he be pleased, for never in his life had he fingered the like of that beautiful seven-pound arm, my one serious extravagance and the finest thing of the kind which a world-famous maker could build.

"We'll out-gun 'em fo' shuah," he said, then hastily added, "Hello! here comes your rival."

The introduction and totally unnecessary explanations followed, and, after the manner of men, we looked each other over. There is a certain mesmeric, or other influence in a cool, deliberate scrutiny, and the other fellow assuredly got all that was coming to him, for the writer was not ignorant of match-making. The rival was a tall, slender, handsome young fellow, straight as a rush.

"West Point, Mr. M——?" I ventured, after a moment.

"Hardly that—*yet*," he retorted, and a flicker of something very like a faint sneer for an instant played about his mouth. He examined the gun, and again the mouth told the same story, although outwardly he was the perfection of good breeding.

"You're a bit overfond of yourself, my bold Bucko," was my inward comment.

Somehow, after chatting for an hour or so among pleasant company, the match did not appear hopeless, although the talk proved that young M—— was considered a tearing fine shot. Just what *he* thought about it, of course, was unfathomable, but his jauntiness *did* seem to have a certain forced air. In fact, the man did not ring true.

"Come, time to turn in," at last said the colonel, and we walked away together. Then for half an hour I listened to the counsel of a man who could outgamble and outbluff all his friends; who was a master at most games of hazard, and who thoroughly understood how to get the last ounce out of any man he stood behind. "Mark my words, suh," he concluded, "I know the man. Well ahead, he's a wondah; even, he's only ordinary; and once behind, he's beat. Give it to him from the start, and keep on giving it to him. No matter if you're behind, keep after him, and remember he's liable to come back to you any minute. We've got him beat as sure as sunrise. Now go get your sleep, and don't you *worry*. Leave it to *me*, suh."

Promptly on time the wagon drove up, the colonel tooling a pair of grand blacks. In the rear seat sat M—— and his friend, and between

their feet was a fine Irish setter. In front was the colonel, chipper as a boy, and beside him a magnificent heavy pointer. The keen eyes gave me one searching glance, then gleamed with satisfaction, for sleep had been what it should be, and he at once recognized the fact. In a moment we were off, and within an hour we had reached the first ground, a series of vast natural pastures with brushy hills beyond. The dogs were started, and as they raced away, the colonel said: —

"Gentlemen, you are to shoot in turn and to order. When I say 'Go,' the gentleman whose turn it happens to be must either protest there and then, or take what flushes, providing it be a game bird within a reasonable distance. There will be no appeal after either gentleman has fired his gun. Mr. M——, your friend has won the toss, and he wants first shot. You will use both barrels if you see fit; a bad shell will be 'no bird,' and a fair bird allowed to go unshot at will be 'lost.' Do you understand, gentlemen?"

We signified that we thoroughly understood, and the team followed the dogs, which were tacking far away. It soon developed that the dogs were having a private match of their own. The red fellow, lean and hard and devil-may-care, like the true Hibernian he was, kept shaking out links until he got to racing speed — and such speed! On and on he flew, cutting out his

ground with a beautiful precision which spoke eloquently of careful breaking and regular work. But fast and game as he was, he had a worthy rival. The big pointer — white as marble with the brand of the old blood, a lemon head — matched him stride for stride, going with a snap and dash which augured ill for any dog at the close of a day.

At length the white dog swerved from a cross-wind tack and went bounding up-wind for perhaps one hundred yards. Then his gallop slowed to a trot, the trot to a walk, and with head and tail raised high above the line of his back, he grandly drifted to his anchorage. Big and white, he loomed large above the grass — a glorious image of steadfast purpose, which might well have been carved from rarest marble by some master hand of old. Presently the red fellow swung about, and, instantly grasping the situation, stopped almost in a stride. He too might have passed for some graven image, were it not that the breeze rippled the silken feather of his quivering stern.

"Out with you, gentleman. You're first, Mr. M——" said the colonel, as we descended. In a moment the "twelve" was snapped together, but M—— seemed to have a trifle of trouble. He muttered something to his friend, dropped a shell, picked it up, and showed a slightly heightened

color. The colonel solemnly winked a wicked eye, but made no comment, so we marched toward the pointer, the team walking close behind.

M—— carried his gun over his shoulder with the guard upward, his hand clenched on the grip. It was a big ten-gauge, and by the finish of it an expensive arm, and by a famous American firm. To be candid, the combination looked decidedly formidable. The method of carrying, while a common one among chicken shooters, was to me a novelty, and I wondered what sort of a wrist the man had who would whirl such a gun to the firing position. Subsequent experience proved the trick to be very easy, but it has the decidedly bad tendency to make a man undershoot a swiftly rising bird.

Somewhat to my surprise, M—— stopped when within a couple of yards of the dog, and set himself as a man will when at score. Glancing ahead, I saw a small upright object which looked exactly like a striped gopher erect upon his haunches. Presently another and another defined themselves among the grass, and I realized that a number of chickens were squatting within a zone of about twenty yards.

"Burr-urr!" up went a thing as big as a hen, but it sped away at a very fair rate. Instantly M——'s gun was levelled, but instead of the expected prompt report, he held on and on, till it

seemed he never would shoot. At last the big gun roared, the chicken went down like a wet rag, and I also "tumbled" to something! This man understood the game, he knew he had a hard-shooting gun, and he had faced the traps. Still, his method lacked finish, and all things considered there was nothing very alarming about the performance, for it really seemed as though a clever sprinter might have broken shot and caught the fowl. Appearances, however, are deceptive.

"Go!" said an unmistakable voice, and at the sound of it there was a roar of wings and half a dozen birds flushed. Two bore to the right, and to cut the head off the first and repeat on the slow follower was easy enough.

"Good boy! well done, suh!" exclaimed the colonel, then we gathered the birds and handed them over. M——'s was fairly well peppered, while one of the others was minus the head and most of the neck. The colonel grunted at the sight and looked earnestly at me, but I could make nothing of his expression. Again we moved on, and to make short a long story, we were fairly settled down to work with the kills even at nine straight. Three more of mine were headless, and as we went to another point, I heard the colonel say — "Wish he'd hit one squarely, I'd dearly like to see what the little gun can do."

Still I failed to divine his drift, but the next chicken brought light. The shot was a square, crossing chance and, to my amazement, the slow bird flew straight ahead — clean missed! Instantly I knew the gun had been too far ahead, and then there came the proper translation of the colonel's remark — he had been fearful of just what had happened, and he had tried to convey as much to me without going beyond what he considered the limit of strict fairness. I stole a glance at him and saw that his face was very red, and that the white mustache was bristling in a marvellous fashion. M—— killed his next bird, which placed him one ahead, and there was no mistaking his sneering expression as he glanced at his friend.

On the instant came the remembrance of the colonel's warning against allowing him to get the lead, and I realized that the match might possibly be lost through a bit of sheer folly. There and then came the grim resolve to let daylight in abundance through every succeeding fowl that offered. The next one got it squarely in the back at about twenty-five yards and the works of it flew to the four winds of heaven. The next was mashed to a pulp, and the next would hardly hold together. "That's the right way to kill chickens — meat don't count in a match!" remarked the colonel, and from then on I under-

stood. But M—— had got his saving lead, he felt he was a winner, and shot accordingly.

As the thing progressed, the strain of it increased, and finally M—— missed. Here was a chance; but, alas! only a few feathers answered the small gun's appeal, and the score remained as it had been. By this time the prairie had been thoroughly worked, so it was agreed to go to another about a mile away. Barring the path thither lay a long slope of scrub, and near its foot was what looked like a wall of tall thicket; beyond that a broad stubble. The colonel cracked his whip, a thing he was seldom known to do, and the spirited team sped away like wild horses.

"I say, *Colonel!*" exclaimed M——'s friend, "hadn't we better keep up to the ridge? It's all clear up there;" and there was a decided tone of anxiety in his voice.

"Not worth while turning now; why didn't you speak back yonder?" responded the colonel, who seemed to have all he could do to hold his nags. Verily, the colonel knew what he was about!

Near the thicket the team steadied, and we saw the dogs busy over some ground-scent. "Whoa!" said the colonel.

"Hadn't we better move on?" said M—— and his friend in one breath. "There's lots of birds up—"

"There's a point—steady, you!" roared the

colonel, and we saw the white dog fixed and the red fellow drawing to him.

"H——l!" said M——'s friend under his breath.

"Your shot, suh!" said the colonel, bowing to me, and again an eyelid quivered.

As I neared the dogs I wondered, for it was not a likely spot for chickens. The explanation was sudden. "Birr-birr-birr!" Not chickens, but thirty-odd *quail* stormed up out of the grass, and in an instant I was at home. To a man trained in the hottest corner of western Ontario, where the timber is heavy, this cover seemed but a trifle, and I felt like Wellington did when he heard Blücher's guns. A brace of birds fell, were retrieved, and the dogs ordered on.

"I say, Colonel," remarked M——'s friend, crisply, "let's get out of this wretched stuff, the match is at *chickens*, you know!"

The colonel stopped the team, turned about slowly, looked steadily at each of us in turn, and gravely asked, "The match — is — at — *what* — suh?"

"At chickens; that is, as *I* understand it," replied M——'s friend, somewhat confusedly.

"Mr. M——, did *you* so understand it?" asked the colonel, very slowly.

"I — well — no-o-o! But this is miserable ground. I'm sure Mr. S—— don't fancy it. Like to see him have a clean, fair chance, you

know," responded M——, looking extremely uneasy.

"Mr. S——, what do you say, are *you* afraid of a trifle of cover?" continued the arch villain.

"Me, why, no! Anything will suit me," I replied sweetly; for at that instant I saw the white dog stiffen, and I winked a warning.

The colonel's turning about was a masterpiece of acting, for he really was in a deuce of a fidget. Slowly he settled in his seat; slowly his keen eye roved along the edge of the thicket, till he saw the white cause of my wink. Too clever by far even then to make a mistake, he remarked:—

"Well, gentlemen, as Mr. S—— has no objection, we'll go to the grass again. Very handsome of him, I'm shu-ah, as by rights Mr. M—— should have at least two tries at quail. However—"

He actually had made a bluff at turning the team, when I sung out, "Look yonder! Is that dog pointing?"

"Point, gentlemen! Your turn, Mr. M——" quoth the colonel, with an air.

Poor M——! He didn't fancy it and his face clearly showed it, while his friend looked black as thunder. Down he went to his doom. There was no time for holding on; the birds whizzed for cover, and he *had* to hurry. Result—as clean a miss as man could make.

"Point! One more to even things, Mr. M——,"

said the colonel, looking as solemn as a red-faced owl.

Once more poor M—— failed; he had no heart for the task, and a dainty brown hen whirred to safety.

"Now, gentlemen, for the open," said the colonel, and he shook up his team as though his sole anxiety was to find the biggest, laziest grouse in the state. He *was* anxious, too, for there is nothing like getting a short-tempered man to try to do something when he's hot.

"Point! Yours, Mr. S——," he sung out half an hour later, and that particular chicken might have served as the title-deed to a lead mine. Up sprang another, and it flew into four bits.

"Go!" said he to M——, who promptly went —to pieces!

Never was seen a worse case of genuine *quit*, and suffice it to say, after three perfectly inexcusable misses, he turned to me and said, "I — I — give it up. I'm not feeling very well."

At the club. The colonel, if possible, more suave and debonair than usual.

"Yes, suh, *boo*-tiful match, suh; one of the finest ever I saw, suh! They outgunned us a bit, suh, the big 'ten' against a poor little 'twelve,' but my young friend is quick, suh, *ree*-markably quick, suh, and that helped, espe-

cially on some quail which we *accidentally* found. Yes, suh, with pleasure, I'm shu-ah; and my young friend? You know my young friend? Aw, beg pawdon! Mr. H——, allow me, Mr. S——."

Three hours later he said in strictest confidence, "I always liked the English, Southern, you know, — I always preferred a pointer, got one, you know, — and I've always fancied a small gun, quicker, you know, — and I've never lost a match of my own making, suh, *never*, suh!"

As we walked home together, he said, "Now, my deah boy, listen to me. I've offered a return match at those chickens — which we *won't* get. Mark my word, suh, we'll *never* get it. But," — and he paused, "you saw that square-jawed man, with the cropped mustache, didn't you? Well, we'll receive, suh, a bluff from that quarter, suh, yes, suh, — *a bluff from that quarter!*"

"And —?" I ventured.

"We'll decline it, suh, yes, *de-e*-cline it! That man's *square-jawed*, suh, he don't know how to weaken, suh, — besides — he can beat the devil, suh, y-e-s, beat the devil!"

"You never make a match on wine, do you?" he anxiously inquired, as we reached the parting of the ways.

"Never!" I replied, laughing, for the colonel's face was very red.

"A good rule, suh, — an excellent rule! Some

young fellows make fool — but, there, I've said enough, suh, quite enough. Good night, suh."

"Good night, and many thanks, Colonel," I sung after him, then I laughed softly, for he distinctly lurched — once.

THE HEATH-HEN

(*Tympanuchus cupido*)

Once a numerous species on most of the suitable ground of Massachusetts, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Long Island, the heath-hen is now confined to a region of oak and pine scrub of the island known as Martha's Vineyard, and lying off the Massachusetts coast. Only by its smaller size can this bird readily be distinguished from *T. americanus*. The call, love-making, eggs, young, and general habits are so similar that they need not be dwelt upon. Scientists have discovered slight differences in plumage, especially in the sharper plumage of the neck-tufts, and the large, terminal pale buff spots on the scapulars. To the ordinary eye *T. cupido* would readily pass for an undersized bird from the prairie.

Owing to the pressure of eastern civilization, the birds have retreated to their last stronghold, a tract of about fifty square miles. This is a region of almost impregnable cover, wherein, with proper protection, the birds may thrive for an indefinite period. As may readily be imagined,

they are of interest to sportsmen merely as the melancholy remnant of an almost lost race.

THE LESSER PRAIRIE-HEN
(*T. pallidicinctus*)

Beyond a somewhat paler tone of plumage, this bird has little to distinguish it from *T. americanus*, although it has been considered a separate race. Its range includes southwestern Kansas, the Indian Territory, and western Texas. Throughout much of this territory it is very abundant, and it furnishes excellent sport.

ATTWATER'S PRAIRIE-HEN
(*T. attwateri*)

This race of *T. americanus* is peculiar to the coast region of Louisiana and Texas. It is distinguished by the almost bare tarsus, and a squareness of the ends of the feathers composing the neck-tufts.

THE SHARP-TAILED GROUSE
(*Pediocetes phasianellus*)

Adult male — Entire upper parts, black, with many narrow bars of buff, and buff mottlings; bars on rump and upper tail-coverts, paler buff; wings, like back, with broad, central white streaks on scapulars, coverts, spotted with white; secondaries, barred and tipped with white; primaries, dark brown, outer webs showing evenly distributed white spots; under parts, white, spotted with black on throat and front of neck, and broad V-shaped marks of blackish brown near the centre of the feathers, most

distinct and numerous upon breast and flanks, and paling and decreasing in size as they near the abdomen; long, central feathers of tail, black, irregularly barred with pale buff and white, remainder of feathers, white; under tail-coverts, white, with a dark brown streak along shafts of some. Legs and toes, covered with hairlike, pale brown feathers; bill, dark horn. Total length, about 16 inches; wing, $8\frac{1}{2}$; tail, to end of elongated central feathers, $5\frac{1}{2}$. Female, like the male, but usually a trifle smaller. Downy young, very pretty — upper parts, buff, with irregular spots and lines of black; under parts, light yellow, washed on breast with buff. Range — Canadian provinces, from Lake Superior and Hudson Bay to Fort Simpson.

This sturdy and valuable game-bird is seldom, if ever, found below 52° south, which means that it must be considered a purely Canadian species. It has been taken as high as 69° of north latitude, and occasionally on some of the eastern slopes of the Rockies, but there is no authentic record of its having been seen west of that range. Near its southern limit it intergrades with the better-known race, *P. p. columbianus*, which it so closely resembles that only a trained eye would note the difference — a general darker cast of plumage.

THE COLUMBIAN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE
(*P. p. columbianus*)

This is the well-known "pintail" and "spike-tail" grouse of sporting lore. It is a race of the preceding species, distinguished by a paler tone of the upper parts, and by having the toes bare instead of feathered. Its habits closely resemble

those of the pinnated grouse. During the love-making season it holds similar gatherings at dawn, and performs the same curious antics, intermingled with furious battles for possession of the females. The males also have well-developed neck-sacs, which they inflate and exhaust like the pinnated grouse. The sound produced, however, is more broken, and lacks the booming volume so characteristic of the effort of the male prairie-hen. Its range includes the eastern Rocky Mountains, from Montana and Wyoming to Oregon and Washington, northward and along mountains to central Alaska. The nest and eggs are hardly to be distinguished from those of the prairie-hen; the young are equally active, and their food is about the same. At the approach of cold weather they pack and become wilder. After the winter has fairly set in, the packs take to whatever timber they can find in their vicinity, and while they may be seen perched in the distance, they will seldom allow a gun to approach within range. When flushed, like its nearest kin, it utters a croaking cluck, repeated several times.

THE PRAIRIE SHARP-TAILED GROUSE

(*P. p. compestris*)

So close is the resemblance between this and the preceding race that a detailed description is unnecessary. Its present range includes the

prairies east of the Rockies from Montana to New Mexico, and from Wisconsin and Illinois to Colorado. Among sportsmen it is known as "pintail," "sharptail," and "whitebelly," and by many, including the writer, it is deemed a better bird than the pinnated grouse, from which, in habits, it presents no marked variation. It is extremely probable that this species was once abundant much farther east than its present limit, but it has drifted before the advance of agricultural operations until it has come to be considered as being peculiarly a bird of the great grassy opens. Early in the season it sticks to the grass, but so soon as the air becomes sharp it hangs more and more about brushy slopes and ravines, or clumps of small timber. Upon a crisp morning the birds may be seen by dozens in the trees, upon stacks, and frequently upon the roofs of outbuildings.

The love-making antics ("chicken dances" of the settlers) are, if anything, more absurd than the performances of the pinnated grouse. They are marked by the same curious strutting and posturing, and furious battles, while the noise of the excited males may be heard far across the open. Occasionally this booming is heard late in the season, the writer having noted it upon several occasions while he was lawfully seeking the game.

The nest is placed in any convenient cover, brush or grass, and the eggs are buff, freckled with reddish brown. The average number is about a dozen, and only one brood is raised in a season. The female is a careful mother, tending her chicks with all the watchfulness of a barnyard fowl; but in spite of her devotion and the activity and cleverness at hiding of the young, a large percentage of them fall victims to hawks and snakes and foxes.

It has been claimed by more than one well-known expert that the sharptail and pinnated grouse are bitter foes, but this I am inclined to doubt. I am well aware of the belief among western sportsmen that the one species drives the other from its haunts, but believe that the true reason for the supplanting of one species by the other is nothing more than the closer settlement of what a few years ago were wild regions. In other words, one bird follows the farmer, while the other retreats before him. Of the frequently mentioned battles between the two birds, I must confess ignorance, having never seen such an encounter. No doubt a couple of love-mad males would fight and to a finish, precisely as two rival barnyard cocks will fight when each fancies that the other is invading private rights; but that the two species are hostile to the point of non-endurance of a close proximity, is, to say the least, ques-

tionable. Certain it is, I have flushed the two species close together, so close, that upon one occasion I dropped a pinnated grouse with one barrel and a sharptail with the other. It is possible the birds might shortly before have been driven from opposite points of the compass to the common cover, but there was nothing to indicate that such was the case. Furthermore, I have seen and handled birds which, so far as could be judged, were hybrids — the product of a union between the two, which would suggest that, at least occasionally, the alleged hatchet was buried. Taken all in all, it would appear that altered conditions, rather than any unusual hostility between the species, are responsible for the respective retreat and advance.

The sport afforded by this grouse is of a very high order. At the opening of the season it lies well to the dog, and springs with the usual whirr of wings, at the same time uttering a vigorous clucking, which is repeated again and again as the birds speed away, alternately flapping and sailing. When driven to brush, they very frequently behave not unlike quail, flushing close at hand, and offering the prettiest of single chances. The flesh is excellent, light-colored in young birds and darkening with age, but always worthy of a place on the board.

Not seldom, as one nears the pointing dog, he

will see the birds squatted in the grass and, perhaps, have one after another turn and run a few yards before taking wing. When thus seen they are very handsome, the crest is raised, and the white hinder feathers show like the flag of a deer, or the scut of a cottontail rabbit. Almost invariably the flush is straggling, giving a quick man a fine opportunity for scoring again and again. At the proper season, *i.e.* just before the broods begin to pack and become wary, this bird affords sport to be long remembered. I have enjoyed it to the full, and know of nothing better for a business-harassed man than a day on the sunny open with the sharptails behaving well. Like all prairie-grouse, this bird, rising close, is an easy mark for whoever has learned not to be hurried by the sound of wings. A good twelve-gauge, properly held, should stop its buzzing and clucking fully three-fourths of all reasonable chances.

Once I spent a week with a western man who was that rare combination of dead shot and microscopic observer. He was semiscientific, too, and exceeding wise regarding the ways of bird and beast. One glorious day the pair of us had shot till midafternoon, and were lounging on a little knoll while the dogs got some needed rest. About two hundred yards away was a small haystack, perhaps ten feet high. It happened that

I was using, by request, a beautiful seven-pound hammerless, the property of my comrade. It suited me to perfection, and I had offered a stiff price for it, but, owing to its having been presented to him, he would not sell. Presently he said, "See those two sharptails on that stack — go kill 'em both, and I'll give you that gun for nothing."

"I'll take you," I retorted, and began the stalk. Contrary to all expectations the birds remained on the stack until I had approached within twenty yards. They were beauties as they stepped about with crests perked up, tails slightly raised, and furry pantalettes recklessly displayed in a most unladylike manner. Once they crossed, and I was seized with a diabolical longing to blow their heads off and claim the gun, but they were too pretty for that. From the rear I could hear my friend bawling, "Look out, there! Steady now! Toho! To-ho-o-o! Catch 'em!" and I guessed he was getting anxious about his gun and was doing his best to induce a case of rattles. Still the fool birds minced to and fro, despite my frantic whistling and hissing at them. To go nearer would bring me too close to the stack, while it seemed that every instant they *must* fly.

Only those who have undergone periods of nerve-racking suspense can appreciate my sensations. Suddenly, and precisely when I was sure

they wouldn't, they took wing. A quick snap shattered one, and at the instant I realized the need of swift action, for the other was covered by the stack. I gave a wild leap, luckily to the right side, caught a glimpse of the bird near fifty yards away, pulled on general principles, and saw it sail away for perhaps one hundred yards. Not bothering over watching it further, I picked up my bird and turned laughing toward my comrade, for the whole thing, of course, was a joke.

He was propped on his hands and toes, and staring in the direction of the lost grouse. "Steady, you!" I shouted at him, for he looked ridiculously like an overgrown, bobtailed pointer. He laughed as he straightened, but the laugh sounded oddly.

"You came mighty near losing this gun; if it hadn't been for that infernal stack, I'd have tumbled the pair of 'em," I continued as I returned the twelve-gauge.

"Ya-as," he drawled, "I came *mighty* near losing the gun. I was certain they'd both fool you, they usually go off a stack like that one that got away."

"How about my little airy prancing; ain't I quite a mover?"

"You *are* quite a bucking broncho; I had no idea a two-hundred-pounder could be so nimble; where'd you learn such tricks?"

"Eastern woods, my boy, on turkeys and ruffed grouse — got to skip around trees, drop to your knees, shoot from hip, sometimes stand on your head to see under cover," I retorted, laughing. "Now, let's have a bite and proceed; but first a health to that sneaking fowl, for he cost me a gun."

"Here's to him, for he cost *me* a gun," said my friend.

I noticed the slip, but it appeared to require no comment, so we ate our sandwiches and prepared for the back track.

When we were all ready, my comrade drew himself up very straight, and remarked, "I'm a poor liar — that gun's yours — you killed that other bird."

"Wh-a-a-t?" I gasped, for his face showed that he meant what he said.

"I feel like a cur — forgive me; let's go get it, I marked it down," he continued.

I felt something like a huskie myself, and wished the bird was in Hades, but he insisted on going after it, so we went. And a peculiar thing happened. He had marked that bird as only a man trained on the plains can mark, and he led the way for two hundred yards and more, straight to where the ground was furrowed by what appeared to be several small, caved-in tunnels, about big enough for badger-works. Near these, he

pointed to a white feather clinging to a weed. His gun was in the rig, and suddenly he leaped to one side and shouted, "Shoot — shoot!"

Something appeared to be slowly moving in a tunnel, so I snapped at it, and stood peering through the smoke.

"You got him — shoot!" he roared, pointing to one side. A grouse's wing waved in the grass and some white thing showed at which I promptly fired, and then — ye gods! of all the infernal smells that ever polluted God's glorious oxygen that was the elixir. Actually it seemed as though a blue haze steamed up out of the grass, and the first fair whiff of it made my olfactories tingle. Had those burrows penetrated to the hot hereafter, and the odor been the essence of all the evil ever committed, it couldn't have stunk worse, and coming as it did, on the pure, thin air, which drifted from the taintless polar silence, it was a horror indescribable. "Faugh! — Let's — get — out!" I gasped, for I was like to choke.

"Yes, there was a skunk at both ends of this trail," said my comrade, grimly, and again I mentally cursed the bird. He, however, was determined to investigate, and he presently drew forth the chicken, and no less than three skunks. It appeared that the stricken bird had fallen upon a family party of odoriferous plantigrades; that two had seized it and were in the act of dragging it

into the den, while the third was coming out of an adjacent hole to render what probably would have been powerful assistance. The skins were in very fair condition and my comrade wanted them, so I beat a retreat while he stripped off the pelts.

"You keep down-wind!" I roared at him, "or I'll massacre you with your own gun."

He stuck to his prizes, which he stowed in the rig, and all the way home and for days afterward my nose seemed full of that awful stench. Needless to say, I refused to accept the gun, which, to his credit be it said, he earnestly attempted to force on me, for he was a man of his word, and assuredly of strong convictions withal.

And there was more a-coming, for a few days later we were actors in a truly powerful drama of frontier life. We were shooting over the same ground and I fancy he purposely drove to the same spot. Anyway, somewhere in the vicinity we ran across an ancient Indian, what Kipling calls "a silent, smoky savage," whom he knew. This day we had what was left of a "grub-stake" for two days, a couple of cans of lobster, one of sardines, some crackers, oatmeal, and in the lantern a few drops of kerosene. The Indian begged for a small pot in which we had boiled porridge — he had previously begged for whiskey, which he didn't get, and for tobacco, of which a portion had been granted.

In a spirit of deviltry my comrade offered to prepare the doubtful scion of an erstwhile alleged noble race a square meal — and he did! While we were fooling round the pot, trying to slip in the kerosene, the Indian grunted and pointed at something in the grass. I snatched up a gun and bowled over a particularly fine skunk which appeared to be working up-wind — possibly attracted by the smell of our viands. If that was his clew, he speedily lost it, for presently there came to us a brand of ozone such as no mortal man could tolerate, for the skunk was not quite dead, although at a rough guess I should have said it had died some time previously.

My friend never turned a hair, but went with the Indian to get the skin, as he started whispering — "Fix the grub for the chief." Into the pot went everything! sugar, tea, pepper, salt, for we needed them no more. I was cutting the second shell to make sure that the redskin got enough powder to "blow himself" properly, when they came back, one carrying the skin and the other the carcass of the skunk. I promptly beat a retreat, leaving behind a dust-cloud of carelessly selected Saxon speech, and presently my friend followed. From a safe distance we watched the chief calmly add the fragments of the skunk to his stew! After a bit — long before the meat could be half boiled — he began to take in cargo,

and we figured that he could stow the whole of it.

"If we only durst give him a slug of *fire-water* — it might get to that powder and — " I moaned, for my ribs were sore. Then we drove away.

Let us turn the tube and see if the dust of the past cannot rearrange itself into some form more pleasing. Ah! the magic of that kaleidoscope, the memory. How the bright bits, the fragments of the almost forgotten, gleam and glow, and how marvellously the occasional dull bits fit into the design and complete the beauteous whole. And how we gray-headed boys love to play with this toy! Looking backward. Aye! there's the rub. Can any but an artist-sportsman, whose hands bear no stain of needless slaughter, look back and see these things? I trust so, for in the clean creed of our craft there are no such words as "greed," or "monopoly."

We were trailing — trailing westward. A few miles south lay a new trail — of steel, and it curved away over the open sun-baked antelope ranges, past the black, poisoned, white-rimmed waters, that were worse than mockery to thirsty throats; across the gray-backed billows where the sage proclaimed the famished soil; across this continent's last battlefield, where labor's sweating ranks charged home and won league after

league of glorious field. Eastward ran that trail, to the crowding ranks of poplar, to the moss-grown portages of the fur traders; to the rim of the world's rock basin, foam-draped by fresh water seas; to the black watch of piny stalwarts, steadfast, awaiting doom by the coming blades; to the gleam of the mighty rivers; to the jungle of masts of the shipping; to the white wrath of shoreward seas, — it ran in unbroken line, the trail of the king of steeds.

We had seen him gallop in thunderous might, snorting great clouds of vapor and neighing defiance and warning to the wild, shy things of his new pastures. We had ridden him on his sun-chasing course, had enjoyed his smooth, tireless action for two thousand miles, and now we were trailing, like our brown brothers had trailed through uncounted years. Behind, beginning miles away, flashed an ocean of golden light where the sun struck fair on the bronzy grass. Before rose a rampart of white, ghostly, impenetrable, shrouding the beyond from too eager eyes. It was exasperating. For weeks I had mentally pictured the first view of the Rockies, by night dreaming, by day conjuring up rock-piles of astounding altitude, for I had been born on the level, years before in a land where an artistic soul had to clear its long vistas with an axe, and being poetic and restful by nature, I — well, I

hadn't seen *very* far. And here was a fog, or a snow-storm, or something equally cold-natured, deliberately interfering. As the Wizard of Western song has put it: —

> "We looked in silence down across the distant
> Unfathomable reach:
> A silence broken by the guide's consistent
> And realistic speech."

"By gum! she's liftin'!" exclaimed that worthy; and — By gum! she *were!*

Like a child at a Sunday-school show, I stared bubble-eyed at the fog curtain, for it seemed to shake in a suspicious manner — maybe it would roll up presently — then what? Slowly, oh, so slowly and majestically, as though Nature herself had charge and knew better than to spring the surprise too suddenly, that curtain rolled away! To say that the panorama was grand would simply be idiotic; from grass-fields, however broad, to the full majesty of mighty mountains rising in stupendous disorder — peak upon peak, mountain on mountain piled — is a leap beyond the powers of that vaulting-pole of all vaulting-poles — the pen. But there they stood, proud, serene, o'ermastering, robed in an awful dignity, as though oblivious of their ghastly scars, where had fallen the blows of ages of warring forces.

Above them all the gleaming helmet of their

iron chief, from which streamed down his snowy locks, half veiling the flash of his silver breast-plate, where a glacier clung; and behind, blue silence, which they alone could pierce.

Somehow, I thought of the old Norse sagas, of god-like chiefs with shields and helms of magic — grim wardens of the honor of the North. For minute after minute I gazed, and then — the guide broke in: —

"Yonder's chickens in the grass!"

In an instant the spell was broken. Forgotten was the chief, his body-guard of ancients, and the dream of the useless, used-to-be, and I asked "Where'bouts?" It was a shocking come-down, but then Nimrod still lives, while we only read about the other fellows.

Sticking up among the grass were stripy-looking, gopher-like objects, which could only be chickens' necks, and in a minute there was action. *Whur! Tuck-a-tuck — Bim! Burr! Tuck-a-tuck — Bim!* Two fell beneath whorls of shattered feathers, while a hand flew through the reloading movements. Then a lot rose together and one barrel did the work, which the second failed to duplicate.

"Load — quick!" warned the guide.

Then a last one — there always is a last one — flushed and went tuck-a-tucking across from left to right. In a moment the trim tubes were lead-

ing its outthrust head, when, thanks to shooting with both eyes open, I noticed something. The flight of the bird would carry it directly between the gun and the gleaming mountain peak. To kill it against that marvellous background was the whimsical notion born of the instant. On it buzzed till the head cut into the white, a yard farther, and the storm of lead overtook it, and for a fraction of time it hung with all that mighty peak to do it honor — and so the last chicken died.

And it was the *last* one, for all-undreamed-of things were brewing which would prevent the contemplated return to those Happy Hunting Grounds. There were blue quail and pheasants and ruffed grouse later; there have been quail and snipe and everything of the East since, and many of them; yet older eyes are given to sweeping the backward trail, till there glows a wondrous vision of a snowy, sun-gilded peak and a dark form hung with spread wings in mid-air, as though let down from heaven by a viewless thread.

THE SAGE-GROUSE

(*Centrocercus urophasianus*)

Adult male — Upper parts, buffy gray, barred with black, dark brown and gray, sometimes irregularly blotched with black; wings, like back; tertials, bordered and streaked with white; primaries, grayish brown; tail, pointed, composed of twenty feathers, the

central ones like the back, remainder black, barred with light buff for two-thirds their length; top of head and neck, buffy gray, barred with black; chin, white with black spots; throat, and cheeks, white; a black line from mouth under the eye and over ear; a white line from the eye down the side of neck; front of neck, black, bordered with white; chest, gray, shafts of feathers black and stiff; flanks, with broad bars of buffy white and sooty brown; abdomen and rest of lower parts, black; under tail-coverts, black, tipped with white; bill, black. Total length, about 28 inches; wing, 13; tail, 13. Weight, 5 to 8 pounds. Loose yellow skin on sides of neck, which during mating season is inflated into large sacs. The female has the chin and throat pure white, otherwise marked like the male. Length, about 22 inches; wing, 10½; tail, 8½. So much smaller is she than her mate that many sportsmen have mistaken her for an immature specimen and even for a distinct race. The downy young are grayish brown with darker marks above and lighter below. Range, British Columbia and Assiniboia, south to New Mexico, Utah, and Nevada. East, to the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Colorado; west, to California, Oregon, and Washington.

There is something about the sage-grouse which is slightly suggestive of the bustard family, and still more suggestive of that king of all grouse, the capercailzie of the forests over sea. It is a haunter of the sage plains, its principal food being the leaves of the sage bush. In these desolate regions, sun-parched in summer, and swept by icy blasts and wolf-voiced blizzards during winter, the big grouse finds a congenial home, for it is as hardy as a bison. In many respects peculiar, it affords a striking illustration of nature's marvellous power to meet conditions which at first glance would appear to be distinctly hostile. As the

sage is for the bird, so the bird is for the sage. Its coloration so perfectly harmonizes with the general dusty gray tone of its surroundings, that when the bird, large though it be, is crouched among sparse herbage, it is difficult to make out even when but a few yards away. When standing erect, or moving, it is conspicuous, as a turkey would be on a stubble, but the instant it squats it vanishes as though the alkali soil had swallowed it. In its digestive apparatus, too, will be found evidence of nature's wisdom. Contrary to the usual rule among its kin, it lacks a true gizzard, but it has a peculiar stomach, which is admirably fitted for its chief purpose, the digesting of sage leaves, insects, berries, and the seeds and foliage of various plants. I have heard plainsmen aver that a "feed of grain will kill a sage-hen," but this is erroneous, for the bird will not only eat wheat, but apparently thrive upon it, at least for a time. Whether it could stand a continuous grain diet without an occasional supply of its beloved sage, is, perhaps, a matter which has not been thoroughly tested. In any event the bird is typical of the wastes of sage which occupy no inconsiderable portion of the West and Southwest of this country, and of the dominion to the north.

It is an extremely hardy bird and able to get along with but little water, although a free and regular drinker when the opportunity is offered.

Perhaps no other game-bird has had more nonsense told and written about it. Even a large number of western men, who should know better, speak of it with the same contempt they apply to that much maligned animal, the jack-rabbit. Many are the yarns spun about the eating of the sage-hen by "tenderfoots," and of the subsequent disgust of the latter. As a rule these accounts are greatly overdrawn, most of them being the creations of brainy young pencil-pushers of the East, who personally know nothing of the bird, its food, or its flavor. I am quite willing to admit that the flesh of an aged sage-hen doth possess that sageness one might expect with advancing years — nay! I will even go farther and acknowledge the flavor of it to suggest a rare blend of ancient duck dressing, old moccasins, and pulverized Bath brick; but what of it? Carved with a bowie, or a hatchet, it is capable of sustaining human life for at least several seconds, and seconds are sometimes exceeding precious.

In point of fact, while the flesh of the old bird is rank and almost uneatable, that of a young one is by no means bad, especially if the bird be drawn immediately after death. So treated, it is tender and no poor substitute for pinnated grouse. Instances are readily recalled when it proved not only unobjectionable, but very good, and this when other supplies were close at hand.

During the period of courtship the male sage-grouse fairly out-Romeos Romeo, his great size only adding to the absurdity of his antics. But, mercifully, female taste exhibits that infinite variety which gives every fellow a chance. The pairing season begins early in March, and the males strut with an earnestness positively ludicrous. Then the big air-sacs are filled to their fullest capacity, the spiny feathers about them bristle out like thorns, the long tail is spread and the wings trailed. One familiar with the noise of other grouse naturally would expect from this great fellow a thunderous booming, but the fact is the sounds produced amounts to nothing more than a broken, indistinct croaking. However, foolish though he looks, and poor though his vocal efforts be, the females are willing to endure the ills they see rather than fly to others that they wot not of.

The nest is a mere hollow under some sage bush, and occasionally a trifle of light stuff and a few feathers are added by way of lining. The eggs are large and sage-buff in color, marked with brown. So far as the writer is aware no two of them are exactly alike, and there is a considerable variation in the ground color. A man handling the eggs with warm, moist hands, may be somewhat astonished to find the color coming off. This, however, is not confined to the eggs of this species. The number of eggs varies greatly, the

average being about a dozen. The writer has seen eight well advanced toward hatching in one nest, and sixteen in another.

When the female begins to sit, the male deserts her, going off with his fellows and taking no part in the care of the young, which are hatched in about three weeks. During the period of incubation the plumage of the hen furnishes a fine illustration of the value of protective coloration. She will rarely desert her eggs unless actually compelled to, and when she is closely crouching with her head low and drawn in, it is well-nigh impossible to make her out.

As an illustration of this, I was once chatting with a cowboy beside a seldom-used trail, when a newcomer, an English ranchman, rode up. This gentleman was a veteran of many fields and quite an accomplished naturalist, hence a close observer. The conversation turned upon the sage-grouse, and the Briton expressed a desire to see a nest, adding that he had ridden out for the purpose of locating one.

"You've probably passed half a dozen on your way here," remarked the cowboy; "there's lots of them around."

"Impossible, my friend, *impossible!*" said the Briton. "I've kept a very sharp lookout, and I assure you I'm no novice at that sort of thing."

"I'll bet you a dollar you're not fifteen yards

from a nest this moment," said the puncher, with a wink in my direction.

"It's a wager," said the Briton. "I'd cheerfully give a dollar to see the hen and a full set of eggs." Then he carefully scanned the ground all about.

The puncher stared at me and rolled his eyes significantly downward, apparently indicating a spot within a few yards of my boots. Thus warned, I presently made out the form of a crouching hen not more than fifteen feet away. Only when the exact spot was pointed out, could the Briton see her. Then he paid the dollar, and said it was "marvellous!" We drove the bird off the nest, and he examined the eggs, but, much as he desired them, he refused to take them because incubation was too far advanced for his notion of sportsmanship. This so pleased the puncher that he hunted up some fresh eggs, and delivered them the following day.

As an object of the sportsman's pursuit, the sage-grouse is greatly inferior to most of its relatives. The young, the only ones worth shooting, are great runners, and only take wing when compelled to, and once in the air their size is against them, although they fly fairly fast. Another objectionable feature is their ability to carry off shot, which sometimes borders on the marvellous. A light gun, deadly on other grouse, will hardly serve for these big fellows, the use of it surely

meaning a lot of wounded birds. The coveys usually are small, as the young have many enemies, among which the chief are fierce storms, wet, wolves, foxes, and rapacious birds, while man plays no unimportant part in the work of destruction. The flush is straggling, and the flight noisy, labored, and unsteady, until the bird has gathered speed, when it changes from a laborious beating to a swifter, smoother advance by alternate periods of flapping and sailing. At the flush, and for some time after, the bird utters a sharp cackling. It never trees; in fact, it avoids everything like heavy cover, presumably because such shelter might interfere with its rising. It roosts upon the ground, the droppings showing a roughly circular and well-separated disposition of the members of the covey. So disposed, with heads outward, the birds are ready to get under way, in case of a night attack, without collision or interference from neighbors.

As winter tightens its grip upon the sage lands, the birds of many broods unite into packs of from fifty to one hundred and odd. The flush of one of these large packs is something to be remembered, for great is the tumult of wings, and piercing the cackling, as the heavy fowl beat the air in frantic efforts to get squared away upon their chosen course. At this season the only way to get any sport out of them is by using the rifle.

One day I was watching an old male which had taken up a position upon an almost bare knoll. It was before the open season, a very idle period on the plains; so, partly to pass away time, and partly in the hope of discovering something, the field-glass was brought into play. Before the bird had been thoroughly scrutinized, some falcon, which looked like a male peregrine, shot into the field of vision, and made a vicious stoop at the huge quarry. Whether or no the grouse had been watching the hawk is impossible to say, but in any event he was ready. As the hawk was almost upon him, up went the long tail, down went the head, and the wings were a trifle raised. Most readers, probably, have seen a man hump his back and get his shoulders about his ears when he expected to be struck from behind by a snowball. The action and attitude of the grouse were comically suggestive of that very thing. The hawk appeared to be only fooling, for certainly it made no determined strike, but presently rose and curved away. An instant later the grouse took wing.

Hardly had it got squared away, before the distant hawk wheeled and gave chase at amazing speed. It was a grand race, but the pursuer was fierce and fleet, and he rapidly overhauled his game. I could hear the grouse cackling as though in terror, and the small size of the foe was so ridiculous in comparison with the burly game, that I

laughed outright. Presently the hawk stooped, but, just before reaching the mark, swerved like lightning to one side, then again made chase only to repeat the performance. Finally the grouse pitched, and stood in plain view as though nothing unusual had transpired, while the hawk drifted away, as if satisfied with his fun.

The chase was very interesting, and while it was fresh in mind there arose a mental picture of a remote waste of sand, and overhead a blazing sun. In the foreground, a dainty antelope going like a wind-driven leaf; behind it a hawk, rushing on hissing wings, with fierce, telescopic eyes flaming with the passion of the chase. Behind the hawk the matchless steed of the desert, laying down to his work and drumming the hot sand with furious speed. And on the steed a hawk-eyed rider, lean and brown, with thews of wire, sitting his mount as though he were part of the grand brute, and riding with the crafty skill, his inheritance from a matchless line of swart ancestors. Through the glaring sunshine I seemed to hear his voice ring like a clarion as he cheered and urged his wild helpers through the dashing pastime of the wild, free desert-born.

Then another picture. The grand, gray levels of our broad land, and from the ranch house a merry party pricking forth with hawk on wrist to renew again the most picturesque form of sport

the world has ever known. And why not? Yonder, like boundless wastes, lie the gray fields fit only to muffle the drumming hoof; there are the grouse, huge birds, unworthy of a skilful gun, but prime quarry for the dashing hawk. There too are the lank, half-spectral hares, fleet and erratic, should new quarry be desired, and close by are the steeds, swift and stout of heart, many of them full of the hot blood of the eastern plain. The hawks swing free about butte, and bluff, and stern-faced cliff, — but where the falconer? Ay! the falconer? The wizard of America arises, and in the stirring of his robe, is heard the rustle of countless greenbacks, the clink of metal, yellow and white. "*I* will produce the falconer! Let but the social leaders nod — let one dozen of a certain set say the word, and I not only can, but I'll *have* to produce not one, but five hundred falconers."

It would be well worth the trying, for 'tis indeed a noble sport. Perchance, a few years hence may bring hawking fixtures where now there are coursing fixtures.

THE PTARMIGAN FAMILY

THE WILLOW PTARMIGAN

(*Lagopus lagopus*)

Adult male, in summer — Entire upper parts, including top of head, back of neck, scapular, and tertials, barred with varying chestnut and black, sometimes blotched; primaries, white, shafts brownish black; secondaries, white, shafts white; throat, sides of neck and breast, chestnut, barred with black, except on throat; flanks, brown, with black bars and mottling; rest of under parts, legs, and toes, white; upper tail-coverts, barred chestnut and black; tail, black, tipped with white; bill, black. Total length, about 14 inches; wing $7\frac{3}{4}$; tail, $5\frac{1}{2}$.

Adult female, in summer — Entire upper parts, scapulars, tertials, and a portion of wing-coverts, black, barred with ochraceous, feathers tipped with white; throat, sides, and front of neck, buff, irregularly barred and spotted with black; rest of under parts and under tail-coverts, buff, barred with black; primaries, white, with dark shafts; secondaries, white; tail, sooty black, with white tip; legs and toes, brownish white; bill, black. About the same size as male. The full winter plumage of both sexes is pure white, with the exception of the tail, which remains black. The downy young have the upper parts buff and chestnut, striped with black; under parts, lighter. Range, Arctic regions of both hemispheres. In America, south to Sitka and Canadian provinces, also Newfoundland.

An exceedingly pretty bird in both summer and winter dress, the ptarmigan is little known to the majority of American sportsmen, for the reason that most of those who penetrate to its nearest

haunts usually are after either big game — moose, caribou, bear, or deer — or seeking the brook trout, salmon, and ouananiche at a time when the ptarmigan is not lawful game. Those who are familiar with it probably will agree with the writer's opinion that as a game-bird it does not rank very high. But it is a very interesting species, and not to be despised on the board. Those who only know the white birds, frequently so conspicuous in the markets of Quebec and Montreal, are not competent to pass an opinion upon the merit of the bird at its best. The flesh of such specimens is dark, dry, and, if it possess any pronounced flavor, is apt to suggest its diet of the bitter buds of the willow. But a young one, fed on insects and the foliage of certain plants, is an entirely different proposition, the flesh then being light-colored and remarkably good eating.

It has been said that the bird is interesting, and with excellent reason, for the ptarmigan furnishes a striking illustration of Nature's loving care of her feebler folk. During summer, the barred and mottled plumage admirably blends with the stones, lichened rocks, and sparse herbage of the bird's favorite ranges; while for winter, man's craftiest art could devise no more efficient protective coloration than the one which would exactly match the surroundings. White upon white is indeed a baffling dress. Ask the deadliest of

trap-shots what he would think of being asked to shoot at a lot of snow-white pigeons against a background of snow. A ptarmigan crouched upon snow, and perhaps surrounded by a dozen roundish, white irregularities of surface, is about as easy to distinguish as would be a green glass button on a lawn. And while most people might fancy the black tail would be fatally distinct, the reverse is the actual fact, for this reason. Every projection above clean snow is apt to cast a more or less decided shadow, and thus cause a darker spot. This the black tail of the crouching ptarmigan so closely imitates that the intelligent observer cannot fail to detect Nature's purpose in the one peculiar mark. When the bird flushes, too, the black tail catches the eye against the white background, which is apt to cause even a good shot to hold on the most visible mark, and thereby shoot below, or behind birds, as the flight happens to be straightaway or crossing.

Another of Nature's beautiful provisions, without which the bird could not exist in many of its present haunts, is what I will term the snow-shoe foot. During the short summer of the North the foot is almost bare, but in winter it is thickly covered with a growth of hairlike feathers, which not only protects the toes from deadly cold, but forms a veritable snow-shoe to support the plump body. A slim-toed, barelegged bird

of equal weight could not walk two steps in deep, dry snow, over which this small snow-shoer can trot with impunity. Other notable wearers of snow-shoes are the Arctic hare and fox, and that strange cat, the snow-leopard. The only salvation of the hare is its feet, while the fox and leopard have coats to match the snow, and the snow-shoe foot to enable them to capture the prey without which they could not exist. The polar bear and the wolf and dog of the North show something of the same provision, which is also found in the feet of certain fur-bearers. A different, but equally useful, contrivance is found in the spreading feet of those snow-defiers, the moose, caribou, and musk-ox.

And Nature, as if realizing the perils of the ptarmigan asleep, has taught it to plunge beneath the cold drifts to escape the cold, and to *fly at*, not *walk to*, the chosen drift, so that there will be no telltale trail for some keen nose to follow to the sleeping-place. And this the bird invariably does, going at speed and butting its way into the snow, leaving never a print to betray its retreat, from which it *flies* forth in the morning. The game of life and death is interestingly played up North — where the weak white snow-shoers are ever hiding from the strong white snow-shoers forever searching over a field of baffling, ice-bound white. Brute noses are keen as the icy

air, and for months the grave problem before every creature is how best to fill its belly; but unless the questing nose chances upon the hole made by the ptarmigan on entering the snow, and the direct body-scent of the hidden bird, it may despairingly sniff the cold trail of many snow-shoes, and whine and turn away.

The love-making of the ptarmigan is not unlike that of the Canada grouse, or "spruce-partridge." The males, with their plumage changing from white to the handsome summer dress, strut with all the pomposity of their kind. The red combs over the eyes are swollen and very conspicuous, as the bird struts with head thrown far back, tail raised and spread, and wings trailing. Presently he leaps into the air, raises himself higher and higher with a vigorous flapping, then sails on set wings through a descending spiral, which brings him back to his starting-point. While thus a-wing, he utters a curt, gruff challenge, oft repeated, a defiance to all rivals. Again he struts, and again goes into the air, frequently to see male after male arise from near-by stations. While so occupied the birds make considerable noise, the bark-like challenge and other calls being heard for some distance. Meanwhile, the females loiter about in the cover, admiring the efforts of the males, and gradually acknowledging their charms. The inevitable battles follow — spirited

encounters, in which many hard knocks are given, and much pretty plumage marred, until the weaker have been well whipped.

The question of supremacy is settled about the middle of May, and the victors select their mates and proceed to the building of the carelessly constructed nest, which is a trifling hollow in the ground, lined with a little grass and a few leaves. The eggs vary in shape and markings, the most common type being a buff ground with irregular, darker freckling and mottling. Very seldom are two alike, and the average number is about nine, although four or five more are not unusual. They are hatched in seventeen or eighteen days. The chicks are very pretty and active, forsaking the nest shortly after leaving the shell. Only one brood is raised in a season; but if the first lot of eggs be taken, or destroyed, the female will lay again.

The male ptarmigan differs from his kin, near and remote, by being a constant mate and devoted father. While the hen is sitting, he hangs about the nest, and will almost give battle in her defence. She, too, is courageous, and not unfrequently will submit to being touched, or captured, rather than desert her charge. Both parents care for the young, and their devotion is very pretty, as either will take almost any risk in their anxiety for the chicks. The young are hardy,

unless exposed to too much wet, which they cannot stand.

The worst foes of the ptarmigan are the Indians and Esquimaux, who rob the nests and snare immense numbers of the mature birds while they are on their partial migration, which merely is a shifting from the almost bare summer ranges to the forested valleys and lowlands. Before moving, the various broods unite and form huge packs which travel mainly on foot. The Indians, knowing this, erect brush hurdles across the route and in the brush set snares, which take thousands of the travelling birds. Another method, of which the writer has heard the fur-traders speak, but which he has not seen employed, is the luring of the jealous male within reach of a hand net, by means of a roughly stuffed skin of a male in proper plumage. According to the tales told in the Hudson Bay Company's posts, the male ptarmigan will promptly attack the dummy, his hate of it being so o'ermastering as to cause him to forget all about his own safety. The number of these birds destroyed each season is enormous, but it must be remembered that both Indians and whites of the bleak North only take them for food, which is far too precious ever to be wasted. Until a few years ago, comparatively little shooting was indulged in except by a few military men

and the officers of the fur company. But of late many settlers have invaded the once lonely ranges, and the destruction has, as a natural consequence, been vastly increased.

Scientists claim that the ptarmigan is in a continuous state of moult, and the writer is inclined to this belief, as he cannot recall the handling of a specimen which did not somewhere show imperfectly developed feathers. The late winter birds naturally showed least trace of it, but the skinning of specimen after specimen in the winter dress betrayed the correctness of the scientific view. The process of changing from the white to the summer plumage is a gradual one, it being no uncommon thing to see every phase of it among the birds of one small area. Some will show a few darker feathers on the neck, others look not unlike small-pile game-fowl, while others again are piebald. The autumnal change to the white is much more abrupt. The writer once went to the wilds of Quebec in quest of specimens for mounting, and the best he could get showed only a trifle of white on the lower parts. About two weeks later he received a number of very fair white birds from the same grounds which had failed to show him a specimen. That the plumage had changed in that time only corroborated the statements of the residents, who had promised plenty of white birds within a couple of weeks.

A TRY FOR PTARMIGAN

We were in the caribou country. Far north, wrapped in his white shroud, lay Mistassini, sleeping through the long, white silence until Wa-Wa called him. Nearer, to the left, lay the Big Flat Water, drowsing under a pallid coverlid a fathom thick. Over all sprang an arch of mysterious gray that seemed to draw in and narrow slowly, steadily, silently, while we looked. Far as we could see, stretching in one soundless cordon until they dwindled in the distance to mere mounds, stood what had been sturdy conifers. Now they were tents, drear domes of death they seemed, pitched there by the army of the Arctic for a bitter bivouac. We stood before the small cabin and looked eastward. No sign of the sun, although he had been up an hour. Somewhere behind the sad gray veil he was shining with the wonderful brilliancy of the North, but that day he would cast no velvet shadows for us.

"Well, wot ye tink?" inquired Joe.

I hardly knew what to say. Something in the feel of the air, in the pervading grayness, counselled caution; yet here was the last day of my leave, and as yet the twelve-gauge had not spoken to the game I particularly desired, the ptarmigan in its full winter plumage.

Joe waited with all the patience of the Indian

cross which browned his skin and blackened his long, straight hair. What *he* thought of the prospect did not matter, nor would he tell; his kind never do until it is all over. All he wanted out of me was a decision one way or the other. If I said "Go," he would lead away north without a word of comment; if I said "No," he would merely go into the cabin and lie and smoke. Perhaps toward night he might say, "We'd best gone."

He was a picturesque-looking tramp in the gay garb of the lumberman. How much he had on underneath I could only guess, but it was quite enough to spoil the outline of what was naturally a beautiful, leanly strong figure. On his head, six feet from his heels, was a shocking bad hat, a black felt he had picked up somewhere. Bad as it was, it stuck on and shaded his eyes. His long hair protected his ears and that was sufficient. Only his small, narrow feet were Indian. They were hidden in as pretty a pair of moccasins as I had seen. But a glance at his face told the story. Somewhere not far back in Joe's pedigree lay the cross, and in this case the blending of the blood of the indomitable voyageur with that of the redskin had produced a grand man, — game, untiring, wizard of woodland, a child till the hot blood was roused, an Indian when the devil was unchained.

For a few moments I hesitated. If I could

only translate the flash of the wonderful aboriginal eyes, or guess what lay behind the mystical bronze mask, — but that was impossible. Once more my eyes turned northward. The grayness seemed a trifle paler, and a puff of air, keen as if from the very pole, met me. "Looks like snow — too cold to snow," I muttered, then added louder: —

"We'll try it."

The black eyes twinkled an instant with an indescribable flash, then he turned into the cabin. As I followed I heard him give utterance to a peculiar low grunt, which might have meant anything or nothing. I would have given a deal to have been able to translate it, for beyond question my decision had raised or lowered his estimation of my woodcraft and general qualifications. I acquired wisdom later.

Within five minutes we were ready. Joe had carefully watched the flask, sandwich, shells, and tobacco go into my pockets, and again had grunted softly when I examined my match-box. Then without a word he led the way on the creaking, netted shoes which alone rendered walking a possibility. He was a mighty pace-maker. Snow-shoeing is the hardest of hard work, and Joe certainly showed me all there was in it. Before half a mile had been covered he had me fumbling at the unruly button at my throat;

and by the time a mile lay behind my forehead was damp, in spite of an air that nipped like a mink-trap. At length we reached the edge of a tongue of fir woods, where Joe paused. Before, spread a mile-broad open, where some old fire had bitten to the bone. In summer this was an artistic waste of lichened rocks, with low, lean scrub between; now it spread like a frozen sea with stiffened billows half buried in purest snow. For minutes he stood, reading the sign as a hound reads the air, his eyes scanning every yard of white from his feet to the irregular sky line.

"Mebbe car'boo," he muttered, as he rolled his eyes toward a slight depression which I should have passed by. Then he stooped and thrust his hand into the snow.

"Big bull — old," was all the comment he made as he straightened up and again led the way.

Evidently the open had no attraction for him, for he swung off to the right, keeping along the edge of the cover. Here what breeze there was had full sweep, and it nipped keenly at the nose, cheeks, and chin. Already my heavy mustache was burdened with ice, and a certain caution about breathing had developed. But Joe did not appear to bother about trifles like that, although his bronzed face did show a warmth of color. His steady, remorseless gait never changed, and the rear view of him suggested that he was apt to go

on till spring. Nor was the shoeing easy. The old snow-shoer will understand what the conditions meant, and while I was in very fair form and no mean performer across country, I thoroughly realized that there was an iron man ahead. This, too, while merely following a pace-maker — a very different matter from leading.

It was, perhaps, an hour later when he halted and blew a great cloud of steam from his lips. I understood, and at once produced the flask and poured him a fair measure into the metal cup. The good stuff fairly fell into him; but an Indian's an Indian.

"You no take?" he queried, while a surprised expression flitted across the chasm which had entombed his share.

"Bad for eyes — snow bad enough now," I retorted, as I put away the flask, for Joe's eyes seemed to say that if I didn't intend to take any, he might as well have my share. But that was not in order.

Instead of moving forward, he smiled and pointed at the snow. "Thur," was all he said.

I looked and saw one, two, three — a dozen tiny trails, as though elfin snow-shoers had passed that way. They were queer little tracks, roundish, indistinct, running in single lines, the rear rim of one almost overlapping the fore rim of another. Never had I beheld the like. By the

size of them their makers should have been of considerable weight, yet they barely dented the snow. Their arrangement was grouse-like, and in a moment I had it. Nothing but the wonderful snow-shoe foot of the ptarmigan could leave a trail like that.

"Snow-grouse — white — eh?" I asked.

He nodded.

"Fresh — where'bouts?" I continued.

"Look — look lot," he replied.

A twinkle in his eye warned me that I had better be mighty careful, and I felt certain he had already seen the birds. But where? Standing perfectly still, I first scanned the snowy trees. Nothing there. Then, remembering the ways of the quail and how many times I had detected birds upon the ground ahead of the dogs, I began a close scrutiny of the snow a few yards ahead. Presently a shiny ebon point caught my eye, then a dull point equally black, then — as if my eyes had suddenly become properly focussed — I made out the soft, white, pigeonlike form of a ptarmigan crouched upon the snow. Then another and another showed, until I could plainly see seven birds in all. They were about eight to ten yards distant, and as motionless as so many snowballs, which they greatly resembled.

My right hand rose slowly to my frosted chops, teeth seized the point of the heavy mitten, and

the bare hand slipped forth and closed upon the grip. Very promptly the grip of the North closed upon the steaming hand, which in five seconds acknowledged the nip of the air and the apparently red-hot touch of metal. Then I let the mitten fall from my mouth.

Purr-r — whir-r — bur-r! The white forms rose something like quail, but lacking the hollow thunder and impetuous dash of the brave brown bird. Even as the gun leaped to shoulder I realized that the white ghosts were not going so fast, but, true to old quail training, the trigger finger worked as though dense cover was only two yards instead of a mile away. The first bird stopped — shattered — within twenty-five yards, and the second not more than five yards beyond its mate. Joe grunted like a bull moose, then dashed ahead, and I chuckled as I remembered that this was the first time he had seen a "squaw gun" in action. But, instead of going direct to the birds, he chased on with long strides to a point sixty odd yards beyond, and stooping, picked up a third ptarmigan which had managed to get into line with the second. This he triumphantly retrieved. Beautiful snowy things they were, with the cold white sparks powdering their spotless covering, and sticking in the hairlike texture of the poor little snow-shoes. Two were perfect for mounting, and even the shattered one

might, with extra care, be saved. So far, so good. I had killed my own specimens and added a new bird to the long score of the veteran twelve-gauge.

I pocketed the birds, broke the gun, put in fresh shells, and, on the strength of an easy but clean kill, produced the flask. As Joe took his dose, I noticed his face. Instead of the customary grin, it showed grave and solemn as an owl's. The sparkle of the eye, too, was missing, and when the sight of a drink didn't make Joe's optics gleam something surely was amiss.

"You foller dem?" he tersely queried, as I made a significant motion. I was somewhat astonished.

"Bad luck — kill dem — look dur!"

Something in his voice startled me, and my eyes flashed northward, whither his long arm pointed.

Under great stress a man sometimes thinks of whimsical things. What I thought was, "I've killed three pups of the North Pole, and here's the whole d——d Arctic Circle coming south to see about it!"

Rolling steadily down, like snowy surf mountains high, came a squall the like of which I had never seen. One glance was sufficient. The white mass seemed thick enough for good shoeing, and the way in which its deadly advance blotted out

the landscape was absolutely terrifying. Under such a downfall a trail would not show for a minute.

"Come — *quick!*" said Joe, as he turned, and the gleam of his wild eyes was a solemn warning.

I have run in a snow-shoe steeplechase over rough country, have staggered home cooked to a turn after one of those desperate efforts which fool men will make for a pewter mug, a cheer, and some woman's smile. I have been "butchered to make a Roman holiday" on sliding seat, steel blades, spiked shoon, and other modern refinements, while shrill voices rang and dainty thumbs turned down (they all despise a loser); I have been guilty of that crime of blunders, getting into the "gym" arena with the wrong man; but of all the bucketings ever I got, Joe gave me the worst! Peace be to his ashes — he was a scared Indian, and he had no better sense.

Only those who have chased a smoke-tanned fire-water worshipper on snow-shoes about two jumps ahead of a blizzard can understand. I knew that he knew the trail, and I vowed that if he lost me it was my fault. All I could see was his dim back rising and falling in mighty effort — then we ran for it in dead earnest. No picking of path — no anything but chase — chase — chase. He never hesitated nor slackened, and all the while the snow thickened and the wind shouted

louder and louder at the death-song. At last, with a roar and a wild horizontal rush of snow, the full strength of the storm struck us. Then we heard the true howl of the "White Wolf of the North" as the men in igloes hear it when the sea solidifies. Mercifully it was at our backs — any other point would have meant — but there's cold comfort in that! I knew that if Joe once got out of sight I might be found frappéed when the springtime came; and winters are long on the North Shore. Besides, I had things to attend to later, my people to see, and my ptarmigan to mount; so I chased on. And ever before me was the snowy back, ever in my ears the White Wolf's howl, and in my breast the tortured engine pumping to bursting strain. I cursed the hampering clothes and the buttons that seemed ever drawing tighter, the thongs that cut deep now, and the nets that had to be swung true while they felt like lead to the feet.

At last came the blessed "second wind," and none too soon, for it found me rocking. The snow-padded back was ten yards ahead now, rising and falling with the same old motion. Ever and anon a savage swirl would hide it in a blur of white, but I was going easier and felt I could close the gap at will. Presently it vanished, and on the instant of its disappearance I realized my danger and spurted vigorously. Before I had

time to think Joe was again in view, and I mentally vowed that not for my life would I let him out of my sight. Indian-like, he had no idea of halting or looking round to see how I fared. I was to follow — if I failed to do so, that was my affair. When an Indian gets scared he's the worst scared thing imaginable; and Joe was going to the cabin by the shortest route. If I failed to make it, he'd hunt for me — after the weather cleared.

Through the roar and the whine and the fog of it all we pounded ahead. First a faint, uneasy dread took hold of me. Did Joe know whither he was drifting? Had his instinct for once failed? We seemed to have covered an awfully long route. Then another and worse fear came. I was getting tired. No mistake about that. No one knew better than I what the muscles of each leg were complaining of. No temporary loss of wind this time, but genuine exhaustion. One quarter of a mile more, if we had to go so far, and I'd be done so brown that a bake-oven couldn't tan me more.

What then? I'd follow the trail far as I could, then curl up. I had the flask and the infernal ptarmigan — d——n the ptarmigan! And I'd live on them for two days, anyway. But the cold — oh! yes, the cold — well, it would freeze me stiffer than the North Pole in twenty minutes, and then

— the White Wolf of the North would come and nuzzle for ears, nose, and every projecting mouthful, and they'd snap like icicles, and he'd get them and thaw them in his steamy paunch. But the rest — the big, rounded parts would fool him, for his teeth would slip on the flint-hard meat, and it would serve him d——n well right! He could just wait for a thaw, and then — a rasp of a twig across my cold nose startled and hurt me, so that I noticed I was running into cover. The edge of the woods! Yes, and there was Joe's track and Joe himself just ahead.

In ten minutes we were at the cabin. Fifteen minutes later we had got rid of snowy outer garb, and had looked upon something that was red and oh! *so* welcome. Presently Joe raised his drawn face from his hands and said: —

"Bad to kill dem white snow-bird. But you good —run like bull moose — else los!"

I muttered *something*, I'd hate to say what, for my eyes were closing in utter weariness.

ALLEN'S PTARMIGAN

(*L. l. alleni*)

A very common bird in Newfoundland, and in the belief of the writer and many others, it simply is the species described as willow-ptarmigan, *Lagopus lagopus.*

THE ROCK PTARMIGAN
(*L. rupestris*)

This bird is somewhat smaller than the willow-ptarmigan, and has one distinguishing mark, *i.e.* a black line extending from the bill to the eye. The summer plumage shows a grayer tone than that of the willow species, and there are conspicuous black blotches on the upper part of the back. In winter the sexes are white, with the exception of the black tail and the stripe from bill to eye. Its range embraces Arctic America, Alaska to Labrador, south to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Greenland. During summer it frequents the hills, mountains, and the barren grounds. At the approach of winter it descends to the valleys for shelter. The courtship, nest, eggs, and young resemble those of the willow-ptarmigan. The sporting and edible qualities are about the same.

REINHARDT'S PTARMIGAN
(*L. r. reinhardti*)

The male of this race has little to distinguish him from the male of *L. rupestris*, but the plumage of the female presents a distinctly black-and-white effect. The habits, nesting, eggs, and young show no marked variation from the preceding race. The range includes Northern Labrador, the islands on the west of Cumberland Gulf,

and Greenland. One brood is raised in a season, the members of which keep together until the following mating season.

WELCH'S PTARMIGAN

(*L. r. welchi*)

A Newfoundland race, and apparently confined to the mountains of that island.

Adult male, in summer — Entire upper parts, brownish gray, vermiculated and spotted with black, some feathers tipped, others barred with white; front, chin, upper part of throat, cheeks, and back of neck, barred black and white; tail, blackish brown; upper part of breast, barred black and white; lower breast, belly and under tail-coverts, thighs, and tarsi, white; bill, horn color. Total length, 14 inches; wing, 7½; tail, 4½; tarsus, 1½.

Adult female — Top of head, barred with black and buff; back and sides of head and neck, pale buff, barred and spotted with black; entire upper parts, mixed buff and black; primaries and secondaries, white; tail, dark brown, the feathers edged, and the four median feathers barred and tipped with white; throat, whitish buff; breast and flanks, pale buff, with broad, irregular bars of black; lower breast, abdomen, under tail, tail-coverts, legs, and feet, buffy white; bill, pale horn color. Total length, about 12½ inches; wing, 6¾; tail, about 4¼. The autumn plumage is grayer, that of winter, white.

THE WHITE-TAILED PTARMIGAN

(*L. leucurus*)

Adult male — Top of head, sooty black, feathers tipped with buff; lores, black; rest of head and neck, barred black and buff; tips of feathers, whitish; chin and throat, white, with black spots; upper parts, grayish buff, barred and vermiculated with black; breast and flanks, barred and vermiculated with black and brown; lower breast and belly, legs, and tail, white. Total length, 12½ inches; wing, 6½. Female, in size and color like the male.

Those who, like the writer, have shot on the mountains of British Columbia and in the western states, will probably recognize this handsome species, the only one of its family which sports a white tail. Even careless eyes could hardly fail to notice the distinguishing mark, for be the bird trotting ahead, or whirring away, the snow-white badge is like the helmet of Navarre. Unlike many of its kin, this bird is not troubled with overconfidence in man, but is apt to fly smartly and present none too easy a mark. It is also quite a runner, and taken altogether, the "snow-quail," as the miners call it, is a fit quarry for an expert, especially if he be a "tenderfoot," unused to Alpine work and the pure, thin air of the heights; for this ptarmigan is a lover of high altitudes, seldom, if ever, being seen lower than five or six thousand feet. In Colorado and British Columbia I found it quite plentiful, and have a distinct recollection that every bird I bagged was fairly earned. Men whose experience has been confined to the East have no idea how one's heart will thump and the hands shake during the first weeks of actual mountaineering. Frequently, far too frequently, there is genuine climbing to be done, and no tenderfoot can do much of it and remain at all steady. In fact, nine out of every ten men are startled, if not positively scared, by the effect upon them of an hour's stiffish work.

Half of the novices will sit down and gasp in a state bordering on blue funk, for one's heart acts as though it would beat its way through the confining ribs, and the air seems to have nothing good, and not much of anything else in it. All of this is both trying and dread-inspiring to the hapless tenderfoot, who vaguely wonders what on earth's gone wrong with him, and if he's not going to die where he is. A reasonable amount of preparatory exercise at moderate heights will remedy the trouble. Yet any man from the lowlands will do well to exercise caution in tackling the mountains, for it is quite possible that any, perhaps some unsuspected, trouble of the heart might cause serious complications. I cherish a vivid memory of my first snow-quail, which ran, and was pursued for some distance before it would take wing. It was killed, more by instinct than reason-directed effort, for the man rocked as he stood, and the big peaks about seemed to rock too. Only a long rest and vigorous self-rallying finally drove away the feeling of awful apprehension that something was amiss in the department of the interior, for the way that heart hammered and those temples throbbed was absolutely soul-scaring. After a week or so the same man could climb with the best of them; but he will never forget that first return to camp, when, on rickety legs, he tottered down the last slope, and heard the laughter of sea-

soned comrades who had "been there," and were wickedly waiting to see the effect upon the aspirant from the East. It was days before legs which could kill any dismounted horseman of the plains were any real use, and some time longer before the schooling tenderfoot could convince himself that there was not something rotten in Denmark.

But, like the others before him, he in due time hardened to the novel work and conditions, and then he took his full toll of snow-quail and hugely enjoyed the labor. And small wonder, for that particular shooting ground lay high up among the marvel-peaks where Titans had builded their stateliest piles, to last the crawling ages through and prove to antlike earthlings the power of the Hand which guided the glacier-plough and turned those gold-seeded furrows, to which men now cling and peck like birds of the air.

The summer plumage of this ptarmigan so closely matches the mossy stones which cover its range that even practised eyes frequently fail to discover a bird until it moves. In winter, or upon the everlasting snow, the white simply melts into the other white, and the searcher may pass within a few feet and fail to locate his game. During the mating the males strut and fight like all their family. The nest is some convenient, trifling hollow, lined with a few fragments of foli-

age and feathers, and it invariably is far up the mountain. The average number of eggs is about nine. They are buff, spotted and blotched with dull brown. The chicks are white and slaty brown arranged in stripes. The mother will give battle valiantly in their defence, acting not unlike an angry domestic fowl. But one brood is raised in a season. The food is insects and foliage, and the flesh is light-colored and, when young, excellent. The winter food is buds and foliage of the native evergreens. The full summer plumage is rarely seen before the first of July, and by October it is changing to the white. About February, or early in March, the spotless dress is at its best. At the approach of winter the broods of a district frequently join forces in a packlike formation. I have seen forty or fifty together, and heard the miners speak of packs of several hundreds; this, however, is hearsay, and perhaps one hundred birds together would be a large pack. During rough weather the birds will go under the snow; in fact, they will hide in snow whenever it is available. While certainly no quarry for a "one-lung," or a boudoir sportsman, this attractive bird is well worth the attention of any sturdy Nimrod who may find himself among the mountains with sufficient spare time to work himself into proper condition. The range of the white-tailed ptarmigan includes the high mountains from the Liard

River, Canada, and western United States to New Mexico.

OTHER PTARMIGAN

Of the remaining races of ptarmigan, which include Nelson's *L. r. nelsoni*, Turner's *L. r. atkensis*, Townsend's *L. r. townsendi*, and Evermann's *L. evermanni*, it is unnecessary to speak at length. They are residents of the Aleutian Islands and are confined to that chain, whither sportsmen are unlikely to follow them for a long time to come. So far as is at present known their habits are the same as those of their better-known kin, and all of them turn white in winter.

It is within the possibilities, perhaps among the probabilities, that some enterprising American may discover good cause for the exploitation of those islands of the North Pacific which to-day stand like the broken piers of some mighty bridge which once connected us with the older world. When that time arrives no doubt the ptarmigan will be there, for they are very numerous to-day. Then they doubtless will pass through that questionable routine which includes the pot-hunter, the cold storage, the chef, and the too frequently outraged digestive apparatus of our Uncle Samuel. Until then, and may the day be long a-coming, it is in order to bid adieu to this interesting and beautiful family and to turn to other game.

THE TURKEY FAMILY

THE WILD TURKEY

(Meleagris sylvestris)

Adult male — Plumage of body glittering with a metallic lustre, showing bronzy gold, green, and red, in changing lights, each feather banded at tip with velvety black; secondaries, bronzy green, barred with grayish, or buffy white; primaries, black, conspicuously barred with white; rump, blackish, with purplish gloss; upper tail-coverts, rich chestnut, shot with metallic red and barred with black; tail, chestnut, barred and vermiculated with black, a broad black band near tip, all the feathers tipped with rich buff; head and neck, red, almost naked, there being some scattering black bristles; from the centre of the breast hangs a tuft of long, stiff black bristles of varying lengths; legs, red; spurs, dark horn; bill, reddish horn. Total length, about four feet; wing, 21 inches; tail, 19; weight, varying from about fifteen to about forty pounds. The female usually is much smaller and lacks the bristles on the breast; the plumage is subdued in tone with but little metallic sheen. Range, from Pennsylvania to the Gulf States, except Florida; westward, to Wisconsin, south to Texas. Haunts, forested districts. The downy young are pretty, delicate little things, yellowish buff with darker markings on the upper parts — exactly like the young of the domestic bronze turkey.

The complete history of this truly noble bird would fill a book much larger than this volume. Formerly abundant throughout its range, the great flocks have dwindled to a beggarly remnant which can only be saved from final destruction

by vigorous protective measures. That such a bird, in the opinion of many the finest game-bird in the world, has been almost exterminated in miles of forested country where it might have been preserved, is a blot upon the sportsmanship of our older states. And the same holds true of the one province of Canada where the turkey once abounded. Thirty years ago one could drive in almost any direction through the woods of western Ontario and reasonably expect to see either the birds themselves or their tracks crossing the snowy roads. Twenty years ago the range had narrowed to the big woods of the western tongue of Ontario. Ten years ago the last stronghold had dwindled to the wildest parts of about three counties. To-day there is perhaps a single narrow strip where one might strike a trail and possibly catch a glimpse of a fleeing survivor of the old-time hosts. And the same sad tale might truly be told of the best grounds of Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin; there are birds in certain parts of all three states, but they are deplorably few. I know that some distinguished writers have mourned the loss of the turkey in parts of Pennsylvania, but I also know that the grief, while doubtless sincere, is a bit premature, for, to my personal knowledge, there still are a few turkeys in parts of Pennsylvania where their existence is unsuspected except by local sportsmen.

Those who know the wild gobbler in his pride will possibly agree with me in the belief that when the bald eagle was selected to pose as an emblem of this country, a serious error was made. It is true that the eagle can scream, while the turkey can only gobble; but quiet, persistent gobbling, especially of markets, carrying trade, and carelessly located adjacent isles, is not such a profitless business.

With all due respect to the bald-headed old scavenger whose portrait is so familiar to experts in the line of negotiable currency, he is by no means emblematic of the true American spirit. He soars — good! He dares the upper blue; with storm-defying pinion and sun-gazing, glittering optic he swings wide and free; afar in cold, thin air he cuts his mighty swath in the full glare, and before the upturned orbs of the nations at gaze. His voice comes down like a clarion blast from heaven itself; then he comes down — down to the level of the steaming beaches where the stinking fish form windrows; to the sodden fields, where sleeps the ancient kine on the site of the exhausted straw-stack; and of that frappéed beef, with its breath like a pent-up pestilence and its udder like a poisoned ice-cream freezer, the emblem maketh his royal meal. In other words he soars, but he eats dirt, which is distinctly un-American. Furthermore, he watches

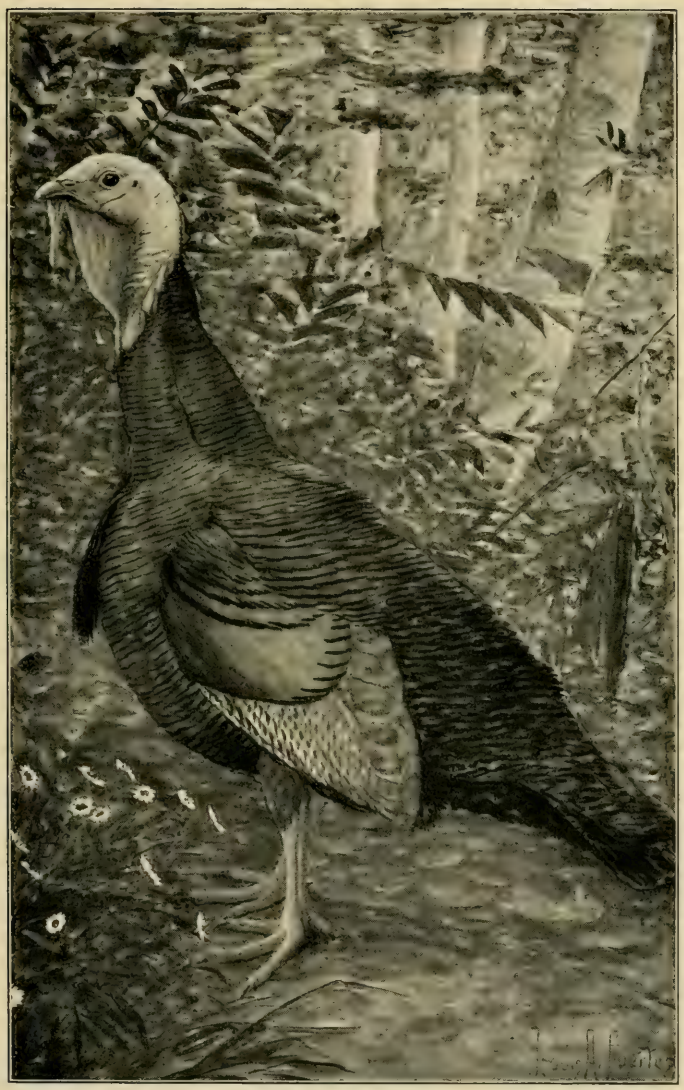
that toiler of the sea, the sturdy fish-hawk, and robs him of his hard-won catch! Surely, any one familiar with the policy of America knows perfectly well that Uncle Sam never even glances northward, or for a single instant suffers his mighty thought to dwell upon those toiling fish-hawks a bit to the nor'ard of, say — Maine? Perish the thought that we, the eagles, ever could stoop to any fish-hawk's fish! Hence, the bluffing, but really cowardly, eagle, the stealer of fish from weaker neighbors, is an emblem unappropriate, very!

How much better it would have been had the emblem choosers selected the turkey. He struts and gobbles a bit — most of us do; but he really is a grand fellow, handsome, wise, and (especially about Thanksgiving and Christmas times) so far superior to the finest eagle that ever soared or screamed, that even the hottest of patriots would prefer him.

In that, alas! now far-away, time when the sporting blood first began to assert itself, there were hosts of turkeys within a few miles of my old Ontario home. Farmers coming in with bob-sleighs laden with wood, grain, meat, and other products, usually had a turkey or two for sale. Then a royal gobbler, killed with a single ball, was the thing for the Christmas dinner and the New Year sideboard. Indians from the big

woods of Kent and Essex counties — in fact hunters, black, white, and tan, from almost every township of the western counties — used to come in after the first tracking snow, with turkeys the like of which would be difficult to find to-day. But, even then, a five-dollar bill was readily obtainable for a prime gobbler, for such a bird was a worthy offering to some revered chief justice, or other good old chap who was given to warming his buttocks in the seats of the mighty.

The demand for the great birds worked harm there, as it has done in all their old ranges. A turkey is easily trapped, and log traps must have been plentiful in the lonely woods. And there was other mischief, for the farmers were long-headed and persistent trailers of a dollar, so when they found a turkey's nest, which they frequently did, they looted it and placed the eggs either under a domestic turkey or a barnyard fowl. It is true that the wild turkey-hen, if robbed of her eggs, will lay again; but the man who did the robbing knew this, and he also laid again — that is, laid low for the second lot. The countrywomen knew the value of the direct wild cross, so they used to suffer their tame hens to range the woods and meet the wild gobblers. The half-wild broods were allowed to remain in the woods until, from feeding on mast, they had acquired the proper flavor. Then they were



THE KING OF WILD BIRDS

rounded up and every one that possibly could pass for a wild bird was sold as such.

I well remember, as a youth, being asked to take some farmer's rifle and shoot the half-wild turkeys, the alleged reason being that the birds could not be caught. This, of course, was nonsense — the farmer's real object being to have a bird that showed the mark of the bullet as proof of genuine wild blood. Another trick was to feed a big, red-legged gobbler until he would scale about twenty-five pounds, then shoot him with a rifle in the presence of some reliable party who would swear, if need be, that he saw the bird shot. Still another, and a deadly way, was to hire some buck Indian to do the shooting and the selling. The Buck would shoot the birds, fix a strip of bark to their necks, and take in two or three at a time to market. Such birds, showing bullet marks, having the bark, and, above all, offered by a solemn savage who couldn't speak ten words of English when he was paid not to, found eager purchasers at fancy prices. This method, however, as may readily be imagined, was not very hard upon the wild stock.

The fatal weakness of the wild turkey was the ease with which it could be trapped — a weakness, by the way, which is common to all gallinaceous birds. The old pen traps, made of logs, and not unlike rough log shanties, used to take

sometimes whole flocks. These traps were built usually on a slope, but sometimes on the level, and were entered by a trench, cut so as to dip under the bottom log. The house or pen had big cracks near the roof, and in the roof itself, through which light could freely stream in. The lower walls and the curved trench admitted no direct light, so the birds, once inside the pen, could see no friendly guiding light to indicate the way out. Leading through the woods, to and through the trench, was a trail of grain.

When a flock of turkeys found the grain they eventually followed it to the pen. If some fed in the wrong direction, they presently reached the end, where they turned and searched in the other direction. Once in the trench and greedily feeding, there was no occasion for them to raise their heads, and if they did, it was no great matter. The trail of grain merely led under an old log and they had picked under many a similar log. So, feeding, they passed beneath the treacherous log, which well might have borne the legend, "All hope abandon ye who enter here." Inside, a trail of grain led to that part of the pen from which the fowl were least likely to notice the trench, and here there was more food. When the gorged turkeys finally raised their heads in earnest and looked for the way out, they realized that they were in trouble. The big cracks at-

tracted their gaze upward, and against these were their useless efforts directed. Possibly, if they thought over the matter at all, they fancied that they had eaten so much that they could not pass out by the gaps through which they must have passed in. Peradventure, an occasional bird, falling exhausted by terrified efforts to reach the places where the light shone, did actually tumble into the trench and so blunder to freedom; but the great majority failed to do so. Not being aware of the priceless value of a shrewd duck for a low bridge, they stalked about with long necks stretched upward to their fullest extent, ever striving to find some lofty outlet. In this they were unmitigated asses — in fact, not unlike some men.

Then to the pen came the — extremely likely in the first instance — the Puritan Parent of this our race. The P. P. was no sportsman, and I can well imagine the horrified turkeys first hearing his nasal whine of thanksgiving, then catching a glimpse of his wolfish mug through the cracks, and immediately afterward catching the very devil from his unsportsmanlike club. After him came another class of settler, perhaps more parsimonious in the matter of praise, more profuse in profanity, more prolific of pens. In any event, he and his progeny did much to clean up the turkeys as they did grand things in

cleaning up the new acres. The wild turkey is a lover of the still — not the "still" of quite a few of his human, but half-wild neighbors, but the sweet God-given still of an undisturbed region.

The first crash of villanous saltpetre which shattered the solemn silence of those ancient woods, was the warning of the doom to follow. The novel sound of axes pecking virgin wood, the dull, splintering roar of the earthward tree, the "heave-ho!" of the toiling fathers, sweating at wall of rude hut and arrow-proof barricade, meant more to strutting gobbler and demure hen than their untrained brains were capable of grasping. If they imagined that the toiler and the "turk" would lie down together side by side, they were right — but, presumably, they did not realize which side the turkey would occupy.

Then they were easy game, which any Puritan prowler could knock over on the ground, or perch, with a bell-mouth of antique model. But as they had more extensive dealings with the prayerful Pilgrims, they rapidly acquired sense; in this respect, to my notion, being considerably in advance of that other game — the American Indian. Anyway the turkey presently made the useful discovery that about one hundred yards was the proper distance at which to keep a white man; and he has ever since insisted upon the observance of this trifling matter of etiquette —

that is, when he didn't modify his rule the other way and make it two hundred yards.

The result to-day is, that when found near well-settled districts, a wary old gobbler is harder to still-hunt than a white-tailed buck. I am not sure that, if either had to be hunted on a wager, the choice would fall upon the gobbler. A good man can run down either, or at least stick to the trail until he gets a fair chance, when, of course, the deer is the easier mark. The buck depends upon his nose, ears, and legs — two of these can be put out of commission by a careful observance of the wind. The gobbler trusts to his wonderful sight, keen ear, and sturdy legs, and to back these he has a pair of wings which, when called upon, can render amazing assistance. So, while at first glance the buck assuredly would seem to be the harder proposition, the reverse frequently is the case. The power of the bird's eye, and the range of vision which by reason of his height he is able to command, form no poor protection, and in regions where he has been much molested he will be found "educated" in the fullest sense of that term. The weakness of his present system of defensive tactics lies in the fact that when flushed, he almost invariably flies in a straight line. An experienced hunter, knowing this, studies the tracks, carefully notes the direction of the quick rush before the bird took wing, then

merrily "harks forrard," confident of again finding the trail about the edge of the next big wood straight ahead. I should say that from one-half to three-quarters of a mile would be a longish flight, even for a badly scared turkey; but they sometimes go much farther.

The courtship of the gobbler is impressive—nay! mastodonic. He might pose as the living image of pompous desire. Most people have seen a strutting domestic gobbler, and the wild fellow has it just as bad. The masters of woodcraft, the comparative few who have lain out from long before sunrise and watched the strutting, the inflated posing, and, frequently, the fierce fighting of the love-mad gobblers, have enjoyed a performance which no other American game can hope to eclipse. But the man who would watch it through must be sly and silent as the lynx, for while a hot-blooded gobbler might be a bit careless, the cooler-headed hens are close by and their eyes are wondrous sharp. And even a gobbler disturbed at the height of his strutting is no fool. Let him even suspect danger, and his pride at once collapses and he is off like a silent-footed shadow. In spite of all their stately courtship, the males are polygamous old reprobates and worse; for not only do they desert the hens so soon as the love season has ended, but not a mother's son of 'em would hesitate to smash eggs or brain chicks if either

were within reach. Knowing this, the crafty hens carefully hide their nests, and are mighty careful not to give their lord the private address. In turkeydom there is no such word as "latch-key," nor would the blustering old rip use it if he had it, except he meant to cut up and smash the outfit. The very last sound the hen turkey would care to hear would be the homeward step of *her* lord of creation, from which it would appear that *some* hens know when they are well off.

The nest is a very crude example of bird architecture, being a slight hollow roughly lined with leaves. I have found it beside a stump, or log, and once under a big brush-pile. The number of eggs varies from about eight to a dozen. They are like those of the domestic bird, white, freckled with reddish brown. Old woodsmen have told me that the third season's laying is the largest, and that the young hen's first lot numbers seven or eight, one or two more the next season, and still more the third, after which the number decreases season by season. This I suspect to be true, for it is reasonable, and the foxy old fellows who told me had robbed many nests in spite of the law, not to eat the eggs, but to put them under domestic fowl. Furthermore, the men uniformly claimed that the young from eggs stolen when almost hatched and hurried to the care of a fowl, were invariably wilder and more

difficult to keep than were those hatched from eggs taken before the wild bird had begun to sit. This would be interesting if it could be proved, but, without proof, I question it, although it might be so. The same men, inveterate poachers all and wise concerning dogs, would not give a rap for a pointer, setter, or hound puppy that had been reared by any non-sporting foster-mother, with the single exception of a collie. They claimed that the collie had brains and could hunt well if properly taught, and that her milk had the same properties as that of a hunting dog, which was true; and that a common barnyard fowl, or even a domestic turkey-hen (providing there was no too near wild cross), in some mysterious way influenced the chicks in the eggs she covered, if she got the eggs before a wild bird had partially developed the chicks. While most unscientific old men are both superstitious and bull-headed on points of this kind, there frequently is a grain of truth somewhere at the bottom of their philosophy. Possibly a trace of it might be found here.

Contrary to a somewhat prevalent belief, the variety of turkey now under discussion, which I may term the bird of the North, is not the original parent of all domestic turkeys. While most of these, bronze, white, black, brown, and gray, are descended from wild American stock, the first turkeys to cross the ocean were of the Mexican

race, now scientifically known as *Meleagris gallopavo*, of Texas and Mexico.

The young, for a time, are very delicate, anything like a wetting being almost certainly fatal to them. The hen knows this, and she is extremely careful not to lead her chicks into damp cover, or to allow them to expose themselves to even a smart shower. Under her ample feathery tent they are well protected, and she keeps them there till her loving instinct tells it is safe for them to move. An old farmer once told me that he had seen a hen cover her chicks before a shower which began shortly after he had finished his breakfast. He was working in a bit of woods, and when he went to the house for his dinner the hen had not moved, although the rain had entirely ceased some three hours before. After the young have attained the size of grouse they appear to shake off all infantile weaknesses, and, once matured, they are as hardy as so many deer.

The chief food of the chicks is insects, notably grasshoppers, of which they are persistent hunters. As the season advances they devour seeds, berries, grapes, and grain. Later, they turn to mast, especially acorns and chestnuts. As the nuts of a district become exhausted, the birds shift headquarters to new territory. About this time two or more broods are apt to join forces, which fact probably accounts for the very large flocks

frequently seen. These "gangs," as the farmers term them, are joined by the old males — now as peaceable as lambs — and the recruited flock fares forward, often for long distances. When very large broods of half-feathered young are seen, they are good evidence that two hens have nested together, which not infrequently happens with both wild and tame birds. When two or more "gangs" unite then is formed one of the great flocks, once quite common, but now so seldom seen.

The frequently referred to migrations of these strong flocks can hardly be considered a true migration, although unquestionably there is a more or less extended movement which occasionally amounts to a partial migration. So far as I have been able to discover, this movement is not necessarily toward one point of the compass, and I have known of several fair-sized flocks which showed no disposition to forsake suitable quarters. The fact is that a large flock requires a deal of food, and the birds know enough to forsake a failing section before famine threatens. Being famous travellers where occasion demands, they are apt to suddenly appear in some district where the mast is unusually abundant, and to leave it so soon as the food supply becomes unreliable.

The spectacle of a great flock crossing a broad

river has been denied me, that is, the adventure as described by a number of excellent writers. The few flocks I have seen cross streams made no preliminary fuss, nor did they bother about ascending trees. They simply "took off" where they happened to reach the bank, and flew, not only across the stream, but to a considerable distance beyond the farther bank — possibly half a mile in all. The accepted version, which I do not at all dispute, says that when the flock has reached a broad river it halts upon the bank, perhaps for days, while the birds figure out how best to tackle the difficulty. Meanwhile, the males do some strutting to encourage the younger and more timid members. Finally, all hands ascend to the tops of convenient trees, from which they fly to the opposite shore. Should any fail to make it and fall into the water, he needs must swim, for there's no other course open, except he dives and walks out on the bottom, which, by the way, he cannot do. This is all reasonable enough. That a turkey can swim for a considerable distance I know to my sorrow, for two reasons, as follows.

Years ago the beautiful work of the gifted Scotch weaver-naturalist, Alexander Wilson, was my dearest prized possession. Now the youthful worship of Wilson was not unlike the worship of a few other idols, inasmuch as it demanded a

trifle of swallowing without too much mastication. I swallowed blindly and bravely until a paragraph was reached which described the swimming which "they do dexterously enough, spreading their tails for a support, closing their wings to the body, stretching the neck forward, and striking out quickly and forcibly with their legs. If, in thus endeavoring to regain the land, they approach an elevated or inaccessible bank, their exertions are remitted, they resign themselves to the stream for a short time, in order to gain strength, and then, with one violent effort, escape from the water."

I was astonished! Wilson, of all men, to make such a statement, when I knew that a turkey could not swim any better than a brickbat! Then came the soothing recollection that Wilson himself did not write the turkey matter, it being in the "Continuation" by Bonaparte. This was not so bad, but still the princely author was wrong. But how to prove it? Easy enough. There was a farmer near by who had turkeys of wild blood, and the river sang below. To get into a punt, paddle to the landing, beg the temporary loan of a young gobbler from the fattening pen, were all simple matters.

"Wot the divvul fur?" queried the jolly Milesian when the object of the call had been explained.

"Oh, you'll *see!*" was all the explanation, as

the bird was carried to the boat. When fairly in mid-stream, over went the gobbler, and up from the bank rose a storm of reckless speech, amid which could be distinguished "Git him out of thot, ur Oi'll rock yez!" And the rock pile was mighty "Convaynyent."

"Charge it to Charles Lucian Bonaparte, Prince of Musignano!" I yelled, as the paddle bent, but he didn't. Instead, he charged it to the "ould man," who later took the change out of my hide. So far as I waited to see, that particular turkey *did* flap along the top of the water for at least a few yards. The Irishman swore that it was his best bird and that it "drown-ded," yards from shore, the absolute truth of which I am inclined to doubt. During the next six weeks I beat that Irishman to the paternal gate sometimes one yard, sometimes a yard and a half—according to the start we happened to get. Then we patched up a truce.

My second experience with a swimming turkey was very different and also very bitter. I had found fresh "sign" about a forest-bordered marsh, near the centre of which spread an acre or more of open water. The proper game of the day was grouse, and there was no tracking snow. A tremendous threshing among the withered rushes and leafless scrub attracted my attention to a grand gobbler, which a few seconds later rose above the growth and flew toward the wood. To

snap at him was the impulse of the moment, and he sank, struggling furiously, with a broken pinion. He fell into the open water, and immediately began flapping for the farther side of the marsh. The way round the marsh was long, and before it was more than half covered, the gobbler had reached firm footing and made off, running as only a winged gobbler can. As there was no trail to follow, he escaped. He must have flapped across about thirty yards of deep, open water. Those who have lost such a prize know exactly what the subsequent sensations are like.

When the young turkeys are sufficiently strong, the hen takes them for long rambles through woods, brushy lands, and opens. She is unremitting in her care and watchfulness, her long neck is ever stretching up and bending this way and that, while keen eyes and ears form a double guard of unsurpassed efficiency. The enemies most to be feared are the large birds of prey, foxes, coons, the lynx, and such of the cat kind as inhabit the southern ranges. The great horned owl is an aggressive foe, especially of half-grown birds, of which he takes many off the roost.

Bonaparte gives a most readable description of the night attack by an owl upon turkeys roosting in a tree. He says: "The owl sails around the spot to select his prey; but, notwithstanding the almost inaudible action of his pinions, the

quick ear of one of the slumberers perceives the danger, which is immediately announced to the whole party by a chuck; thus alarmed, they rise on their legs, and watch the motions of the owl, who, darting like an arrow, would inevitably secure the individual at which he aimed, did not the latter suddenly drop his head, squat, and spread his tail over his back; the owl then glances over without inflicting any injury, at the very instant that the turkey suffers himself to fall headlong toward the earth, where he is secure from his dreaded enemy."

This is purely imaginary. How could he see what the owl did, or what the turkeys did? Those who have shot turkeys on the roost know how much, or rather how little, of detail can be seen even in the brightest of moonlight. And, while the naturalist certainly might cautiously approach the slumbering turkeys, how about the owl? That bird is not at all careless of his own safety; his eyes are for night service and his ears wonderfully acute — why wouldn't he see, or hear, the naturalist? Again, as regards the turkeys' — sleeping turkeys at that — hearing the owl's wing, sailing too! and that wing especially equipped with a feather formation to prevent sound. And then the darting like an arrow — no owl, with the possible exception of the hawk-owl, and that other day hunter, the snowy owl, ever darts anything

like an arrow. All the owls that I have seen, and they number quite a few, sidled noiselessly up to the prey, and then grabbed it with hooks that seldom miss. Finally, the turkey falling "headlong," — if it ever reached the ground in that fashion, and was fat and consequently heavy, it would stand a good chance of breaking its limber neck, to say nothing of rapping its peculiarly tender head against something much harder. Any country boy knows how easy it is to temporarily stun a turkey, even with that handy missile, a green apple. And after the turkey had fallen headlong to the ground, what then? It would simply be precisely where old *Bubo virginianus* would prefer to have it, whether he caught it on the fly, or the first bounce, one or other of which he would be mighty apt to do! No, a turkey of very limited night vision, going to the shadows to hide from a great horned owl, that probably could see well enough to count the hairs on a black cat sitting on a coal pile in a cellar, is not sound protective tactics. Nor will the theory that there might be convenient brush to screen the turkey when on the ground bear out the statement. A great horned owl will walk into a henhouse, or under an outbuilding, or fallen tree, kill under the shelter, and then drag out his kill. This I have more than once seen him do, and I have scored my kill by moonlight as he dragged forth the victim.

The sportsmanlike methods of shooting the turkey include "calling" or "yelping" and still-hunting, *i.e.* tracking upon snow. The night-attack, shooting on the roost, is unworthy of any man claiming to be a legitimate son of Nimrod. Now and then some lucky individual has a chance at a close-lying bird, which the setter or pointer seeking other game stumbles upon; but these occasions are too rare to be considered a form of the sport. Coursing turkeys with greyhounds, as is sometimes done in the West, has a dash peculiar to itself. Shooting on the feeding-grounds from ambush is uncertain enough to be considered fair, while any other way of ambushing a turkey would most likely fall under the head of accidental opportunities.

The coursing of the turkey is the sort of sport to stir the blood of a genuine sportsman. Briefly, it is as follows: The game is given to feeding from the roost among the timber of a river bank, or bottom, far out upon the open plain where insects naturally are most abundant. A well-mounted man, accompanied by a strong greyhound, hides in the cover until he sees the flock has ranged sufficiently far from the timber for his purpose. Then the dog is "sighted," slipped, and as he springs away the horseman gives swift chase. The object is to rush a big gobbler so that he will take wing when headed for the open.

He will not turn, and the fatter and finer he may be, the shorter will be his first and best flight. The business of the dog is to run him gamely and fast, the horse's part is to stretch himself till his belly almost sweeps the grass, to drum off a mad burst of speed, and to mind where he puts his feet, for a burrow carelessly stepped in may mean a broken leg, a parabolic flight for the rider, a few impromptu flipflaps, or possibly one or two broken necks. The man's task is to stick on and yell in fair proportion.

Here, surely, is action to suit the wildest madcap who ever rowelled a nag or staked his neck on the hazard of a manly venture. And it is clean, wholesome, dashing sport, too, in the fairest of fair fields where all favors must needs be won. Impossible in the forested East, where tree boles and boughs only recognize the wonderful human frame as so much desirable fertilizer, it might be made a grand sport of the leagues upon leagues of plains which offer the necessary scope, and ask only the proper legal protection of the quarry.

But the desperate chase is on! The gobbler, after his quick starting run, beats his way upward on mottled fans, then steadies to his horizontal flight. It is so easy. It is true that the grass spreads like a sleeping sea for miles ahead, but what of that? He is a winged thing, and is a

winged thing to bother about the miserable doings of a trio of wretched earthlings foolishly scratching at the grass there a half-mile behind?

The wretched earthlings, however, know their business, and they keep pegging away, each meanwhile thrilling with his own brand of unholy joy. On and on they sweep! The grand dog, fairly hurling himself ahead in long rubbery bounds, the stout little horse buckling down to his task of keeping close to his almost flying canine friend, and the yelling man riding as they of the West ride, *i.e.* like so much horse-hide in its proper place.

Barring accident to the dog, the turkey is doomed. His prime condition makes him short-winded, while the unusual efforts a-wing only add to his plight. Soon he slants to the ground to give his strong legs an opportunity. But fleet though he be, his best effort is pitiful in comparison with that of the animal whirlwind at his heels. This he soon realizes, and, in spite of a lack of wind, he again must take wing. This is the beginning of the end. Even should he turn about and endeavor to regain the cover he so rashly forsook, it would end the same, for in his present condition he is unable to duplicate the first long flight. That was his limit, and when wild things are pressed to their limit, most of them lose heart. Still, he is good for another

shorter flight, but as he rises the remorseless pursuers are drawing perilously near. Up he goes, and flies — this time lower and heavier.

Now is the time for the dog to prove his blood and courage. He has been going like the wind, his lithe spine arching and straightening with superb regularity, his sharp snout splitting the air that pins back his thin ears and hums to them of glorious victory. The wirelike cords have driven the lean limbs till they blurred with speed, yet somewhere in the wonderful machine is that one ounce more, which only a game man and a clean-bred horse and dog possess when comes the final drive. Fifty yards away, and *now* for it!

The fierce whoop from behind thrills him like an electric wave, and mindful of the fame of his long line of coursing sires, he shakes out that last link which has won yards of blue ribbon over-sea. His eyes, which never for an instant have left the quarry, are blazing with that savage light which kindles only for the supreme effort. He sees the struggling fowl slowly lowering; he hears the medley of voice and hoof-beats; he knows that his friend, the horse, and his god, the man, are with him; and like the hero he is, he throws the last ounce of his power into his maddening task. Three more strides! hip! — hip! — hip! — up goes the lancelike muzzle, the lean

jaws spread, then close with a snap like a wolf-trap. Six feet above the grass, the long, white fangs find welcome sheath, and when the tangle of mottled wings and panting dog unravels itself, there are several widowed turkey ladies somewhere in the distant scrub.

Two minutes later the horse's heaving flanks are working behind a slackened cinch; the man is lying on the grass and laughing at the dog, for that worthy — breathing like a locomotive, and with about a foot of tongue swinging from his dripping jaws — is clawing himself along on his belly in an earnest attempt to get closer to the only animal that would ever attempt to make other animals almost burst their hearts and run their legs off, just for fun!

If coursing turkeys be not sport, then there is no merit in dash and action, which, under proper conditions, it certainly should supply. To my notion, too, there might be a deal of sport in hawking turkeys, in the same sort of country.

The "calling," or "yelping," is not the simple matter which the uninitiated might deem it. The chief difficulty is found, first, in correctly imitating the love-call of the hen, and second in crouching, maybe for a long while, perfectly still. Those who think keeping perfectly still an easy occupation, are either ignorant or thoroughly seasoned,

for truly it is one of the most difficult tasks to a novice.

Calling is possible at two seasons, but only reliable at one, the mating-time. Owing to the game laws it is a method mainly confined to the South. The few times I have tried it in the North, of course in the fall, have been toward dusk and after we had scattered a brood of that year in heavy brush. Upon these occasions the "caller" was a common brier pipe with a hard rubber stem. I had been smoking it most of the day, and the first attempt at calling was purely an experiment. We had been quietly sitting at the edge of the cover (which was entirely too dry and dense for anything like still-hunting), in the hope that the brood might work back to the open and possibly afford a chance. My companion wearied of the seemingly useless wait, and, half in jest, I tried a bit of calling.

This calling, imitating the yelp of the bird, *yunk-yunk-yunk*, is done by sucking air through a turkey bone, or a new, common clay pipe. A hand over the bone or the pipe-bowl regulates the volume of sound, which is produced by an interrupted sucking between the compressed lips, difficult to describe in detail. Upon the occasion referred to, wherein the wood pipe figured, the bowl was first carefully cleaned, and then a trial was risked. Greatly to my comrade's astonish-

ment, very fair yelping resulted, and a prompt response added to his wonder. To be candid, the note was off, a bit too dull and heavy, but the birds were young and anxious to go to roost, so it did not greatly matter. Just when the darkness was closing, my friend got an easy chance and knocked over a couple of two-thirds grown birds, the second of which he did not see when he fired. A few moments later I got — a smoke! for there was no earthly use in further calling after the row his gun had raised. The experiment, however, had its value, for it revealed the unsuspected fact that young scattered turkeys would respond to an imitation of the hen's yelp, and the information proved useful later on.

The more common spring calling is an appeal to the passion of the male. Some sportsmen object to it on the ground that it is taking a mean advantage of the amorous gobbler. They argue that to sing the siren song of love until the hot-headed lover is lured within a few yards is, to say the least, questionable; but with all due respect to them, I claim that this calling has its redeeming features. Fairly considered, it is no mean test of one's knowledge of turkey ways and skill in conversing in the turkish tongue, for where birds are educated no duffer can succeed at it. He may elicit responses a plenty, but the odds are that the gobbler will detect the cheat before he has

come within shotgun range, or even exposed himself to rifle fire.

The typical calling is something like this. The caller carefully conceals himself (usually before dawn) near where turkeys are "using," and when the gobblers make themselves heard, which they are sure to do, he sends forth a shyly suggestive response. His object is to persuade some fool gobbler that the fattest and prettiest hen in the whole country craveth an interview. If the cry of the hen could be put into the "personal column" of some paper, it presumably would read something like this: "Would the large, handsome gentleman with the copper clothes, the red neck, and the superb baritone voice meet the soprano lady in gray walking suit, at the basswood stump? Object, a pleasant friendship and general good time."

"Would he? Well, ra-ather!" Being like some men, he gobbles about it, puffs out his chest, struts around, and keeps edging nearer and nearer to the stump. He distinctly sees the rendezvous, he distinctly hears the dulcet soprano; but he doesn't see or hear the evil-minded person who is hunched up behind that stump, his hands full of rifle or shotgun and his heart full of murderous design. The gobbler drops his wings and fans his tail for just one more impressive strut, then he dies of lead poisoning and shock.

This sounds very easy, but it is not every sportsman who can call so perfectly as to deceive the gobbler's keen ear. A single false note may spoil the game, while a serious blunder will surely send the bird to cover with truly marvellous speed, and he will not return. The actual shooting is easy, for lost nerve is about the only excuse for missing with rifle or gun at such short range. In justice therefore to "calling," I may say that the skill necessary to deceive the bird, together with the wary patience required, are sufficient to raise it above the level of pot-hunting.

But the sport of sports with the turkey is tracking in the snow. It is difficult, frequently downright hard work, and it will test a man's woodcraft to the utmost; but then, a fairly earned gobbler is nobler quarry than a buck.

Turkey tracking in great woodlands, especially when the birds are few, is a blending of the unexpected with the might-have-been. The slightest miscalculation or accident may ruin one's chance for a day, while it is quite possible to follow a big gobbler from a wintry dawn to dusk and not obtain one fair chance at him.

The ideal day for tracking seldom comes. If I were to name the conditions they should be: first, a cold snap to secure every bush pond and marshy bit with ice that would bear a man's weight, then a six-inch snowfall, followed by one of those

gloriously bright, crisp, windless days which enable one to see distinctly even in timber and to keep comfortably warm without danger of overheating under pressure. These conditions are by no means the easiest, for, while the bird's feet will sink deeply in new and consequently light snow, a strong turkey can stand miles of such going. The hardest task for the birds is deep wet snow, but this usually means an overcast sky and a consequent very poor light in any sort of cover. Most veteran turkey hunters prefer these rather sombre conditions simply because they are apt to mean *easier meat*, but a fig for easy meat!

What the enthusiast wants is the beauty, the unsullied freshness, of a spotless world illumed by that teacher-light from which we learned about the sparks that kindle under the touch of the daintiest hand. A sunny day in the woods when the shadows lie like velvet upon marble; when the eye can pierce every snarl of vine or far corridor; when the feet are muffled in soft, silent white, when the crack of elfin pistols tells where the frost is working at the sap, — surely that is a day to be out, turkey or no turkey! Brightness is the thing — within doors and without.

Let the sage of the trail smile, an it so please him. He might prefer an easier day; if so, he's welcome to it. When I go into the woods it is mainly on the trail of pure pleasure and whole-

some exercise. The turkey is merely an accessory — the cap-sheaf of the stook if you will, but not much of a stook if considered alone. Twenty-five pounds of gobbler is a fat reward — a noble prize; but to be properly appreciated it should be won at the close, not near the beginning, of a day. Hence the bright, still day is preferable.

Put a good man on the trail of a flock in deep, damp snow, and it's odds on that he will kill his first bird within a few hours, and he may get three or four before dark. He will follow steadily, patiently, remorselessly, wherever the tracks may lead. Should the flock flush from any cause, he will take the direction from the few long strides the game made before rising, and will push on. He knows that turkeys fly straight and not very far, and that the tracks will be found somewhere ahead. If he be cautious, the game is not likely to again take wing. Within a reasonable time, in such going, even turkey legs become weary, and a single track will be found diverging from the main trail.

To the experienced the sign is plain. The maker of the single track is tired and has slipped to one side to hide. If the man has a shotgun, he will follow this single track; if a rifle, he will keep on after the flock. The single bird will surely be crouched in some cover near where it left the flock, and it will almost certainly flush within

close range and afford a comparatively easy chance. After securing it, the man will sling it over his back and again follow the flock until another diverging track is noted.

The man with the rifle pays no attention to the side tracks because the promised chance means a flying shot, or at the best a glimpse of the bird running at full speed. At either of these the rifle is practically useless, for a kill under such conditions would be merely a fluke. The rifleman therefore sticks to the trail of the flock; and if he be game enough to try for the noblest trophy, he will devote his closest attention to the biggest track. It is the mark of the old gobbler, the king of the lot, and — the hardest to get.

He is the strongest and, from his age and experience, the craftiest of them all; and the man who walks him down will surely earn his prize. One after another wearied birds slip to one side, but the big track leads on through the roughest scrub and over ridge beyond ridge. The man slips after, like a shadow stealing from point to point, and with keen eyes ever searching the cover ahead.

After perhaps hours of cautious trailing, he suddenly sees a dark object zigzagging between the trunks, then another and another. Perhaps four or five turkeys are still following their big leader, and most likely all of them are tired. Now comes

the test of the man's nerve and skill with the rifle. The turkeys are perfectly aware that they are being followed. All unknown to the man, they have seen him half a dozen times during the long pursuit, and dark, keen eyes are watching the back track. The man seems to drift from tree to tree.

Presently a turkey mounts a snowy log and stands, a black, sharply defined figure of alertness. The man halts and the rifle comes to the ready. But the bird in sight is not *the* bird — it is only a small one. Another shows and then another! They seem to appear in some marvellous manner in the very places which eager eyes have just searched. The mystery of the woods is in these dark, silent shapes. Still the man waits and stares, though the water is in his eyes and a muscle in a leg is cramping stubbornly.

At last, from nowhere, moves a black mass with nodding head and snaky neck, and it halts and stands bolt upright. The man knows right well what may happen within one minute. A sudden sprint, a clapping of mottled wings, a crashing of brittle twigs, and perhaps (?) an emphatic "—— the luck!" That is all.

But it hasn't happened yet. Deliberately prompt, the rifle goes to the shoulder; the sights line truly on the long, slim neck, — or the centre of the big body if it must be so, — a sharp report

rips the solemn silence of the woods — and then what? It depends. If the man behind the gun happens to be one of Cooper's marvel manipulators, there is a sudden stiffening of a grand bronze body, a great clashing of wings as its fellows flee in terror, and a spurt of steaming life-blood upon the virgin snow. When the tracker happens to be an ordinary man — say like myself, or, for that matter, like you — things are apt to be different, although in part similar. There will be the sudden stiffening of a grand bronze body, the clashing of wings as its fellows flee, then a mightier clashing as the ought-to-be-dead bronze body chases after its fellows, and, presumably (?) in lieu of the spurt of blood, there will be a stream of steaming, bright-blue Saxon speech from about where the tracks and empty shell prove that somebody stood and shot. On account of these little technicalities, I seldom hunt turkeys with the rifle.

But with the gun it is different, and while I know that where one carries a gun he is apt to wish he had a rifle, and *vice versa*, I greatly prefer the gun. Most of my trailing has been done in heavily wooded country, having here and there a marshy opening with big clumps of tangled brush, all of which meant flying shots at comparatively short range. A good twelve-gauge, plenty of powder, and an ounce of heavy shot should stop

a running or flying bird as far as it can be clearly seen in such cover, or in any ordinary cover. The gun should be held well ahead. A single large pellet in the head or neck should mean a dead bird. A turkey, though hard hit farther back, may lead one an exasperating chase before being secured, if it does not escape outright. A broken wing means trouble. A winged turkey, having its running gear still in good order, is a conundrum not half solved. The only thing to do is to bustle after it hotfoot, and shoot at every glimpse of the fleeing quarry. This method rattles the bird, and prevents it from selecting some secure hiding-place. Once get him confused, and he is as apt to dodge into danger as away from it.

Of course, on tracking snow, the trail may be followed; but, if given time, a turkey will work its way into the most baffling cover and, once there, manœuvre maybe for hours. I once winged a fine gobbler about mid-afternoon, and, after refusing one doubtful opportunity, chased that infernal fowl until dark, and not only failed to secure it, but got myself so mixed up that only the distant whistle of a railroad engine gave me a line on civilization, and saved me from sleeping out in the cold and grubless whence.

After one has emptied both barrels at a flying turkey, it is a safe rule to follow that particular bird, at least until its new track has been discov-

ered and followed sufficiently far to warrant the belief that no shot took effect. By neglecting to do this I once lost one of the finest gobblers ever flushed. A farmer happened to see this bird go down some hundreds of yards from where it was shot at; he retrieved it, and told me all about it — six months later!

A glance at a recent hunt may serve as an illustration of the ups and downs and the glorious uncertainty of turkey trailing.

Morning broke with a golden radiance which made one feel that it was good to be alive. A new white mantle had been spread over the brown shoulders of Mother Earth, and all her trees were gay with diamond powder and feathery trimming. For a week sharp frosts had prevailed, and Winter had set his iron grip upon all but steeply slanting water. The previous afternoon I had travelled to the small village in the woods. Twelve hours before a gray sky had warned me, the message had been wired, and my short trip had ended amid the last scattering flakes of the promised snowfall.

True to previous arrangement, "Joe" had me out in a vaguely gray light which he called morning. Everything looked favorable, and within an hour we had entered the woods.

"It's three miles," said Joe, tersely, as he started his long, lean legs upon a route which might end the Lord knew where. As I knew my man, no

comment was necessary. That a hard day was to come was a certainty — just how hard would depend upon the luck. When Joe got started he kept on until night or turkey fell. He strode straight ahead, and he had me glowing before his first halt.

"Thar's their range," he remarked, as his hand described a sweeping semicircle. Before us spread a huge opening — in summer a marsh with stretches of open water and big clumps of tall rushes, in winter a plain of white with a soft mound here and there to indicate where the snow-buried rushes stood. Wise people kept away from those mounds for reasons good — elsewhere the ice was strong and safe. Around it all stood the silent, unbroken forest, huge halted billows of bluish gray crowned with a songless surf of glistening snow.

"Let's ring it," said Joe, and away he went.

Now "ringing" it sounded easy, but it wasn't. It meant the chasing of an iron man who had no soul through apparently limitless woods, in and out of doubtful hollows, and over snow-burdened logs, till you were snow from heels to fork, and miles of this with no let-up. It meant raising the leading foot very high over a big log and twisting after it on the seat of one's corduroys, and meanwhile finding that certain muscles had not been used that way for a long, long time. It also

meant plenty of muttered remarks which would melt snow if all applied to one spot.

But at last, mercifully, a change came. The old boy pulled up and pointed at the snow. A line of tracks, so fresh that the disturbed snow was just settling, told the glad tidings. Four or five turkeys were only a short distance away; evidently, from the trend of the trail, in a long snarl of thicket which bounded all one side of the open.

Now began the trailing in earnest. Twenty yards apart, we stole forward, Joe on the trail, with me steering by his course. For an hour we drifted ahead, silent, ever ready, while eyes strove to bore holes in the shadows under every log and laden shrub. A red squirrel came out of his nest, and the soft "prut" of the falling snow he dislodged almost gave me heart-disease. Farther on, a wad of snow fell through some dry leaves, and the rustle of it nearly caused the pinching flat of the gun-barrels in one fierce grip.

We went on, and continued going on. So did the turkeys, at least the tracks said they did.

At half-past two Joe halted, pushed up his cap, and spat out a much-chewed cud. Then he passed the back of his hand across his mouth and stared sorrowfully at me. I, too, pushed back my cap, and as I did so a puff of steam rose from it.

"What time do you think it is?" I asked, merely to learn how close he could guess, for I had just looked at the ticker.

"Gone two, I reckon; we'd best eat," he replied, and I marvelled.

We did eat, and Joe warmed up, for he had got what he wanted, though from a very small flask. We had brushed away some snow from a log and sat facing, and as he handed back the flask he suddenly stiffened and a gleam of excitement flamed in his steady eyes. He was staring over my head, and he evidently saw something, for his hands closed upon the rifle across his knees. I knew better than to move a hair, or ask fool questions, but as his eyes sought mine they asked a question to which I winked "all right." Slowly the rifle rose to the level till I could see into the muzzle. Few indeed are the men I would trust to that extent, for the piece was cocked, and a premature discharge assuredly would have blown my head off. But I knew my man this time. As slowly as the rifle had moved, my head bent forward till my nose was about level with my belt, and I heard a whispered "All right."

How long he took to get the old gas-pipe where he wanted it I can only surmise; it seemed like time for spring ploughing before he pulled. There was an astounding jar, a small but intensely lively spark sped down along my spine,

then something fell over me, trampled me flat, and went yelling into the woods. By the time I had picked myself up, a raving maniac was whirling something black around his head and shedding turkey feathers with every turn. It was a big, fat hen, which, coming from the unknown, had chanced to alight in a tree not fifty yards behind my back. We tramped on, feeling better, for it was a fine bird.

"What ye think?" he asked two hours later, when the shadows had begun to pile in the thickets. My answer must have surprised him.

We were standing at the edge of the marsh, and we were both pretty well cooked. It had been a hard day, and only the one bit of luck had come our way. We both wanted to get home that night, but Joe, good fellow as he always was, had volunteered to try again next day if I so desired. As he spoke, I was looking rather ruefully down the long stretch of frozen marsh. We were almost at the point where the hunt had begun, and with the light failing it was useless to think of further work in the woods.

Without a word in response to his question, I made a leap upon the snowy ice and ran like a "quarter horse" across the open. The footing was fairly good, and I trusted to luck that the ice was strong, for I was pounding it hard. Out of the tail of one eye I kept tabs on a moving

black object, a something I had seen fly into the open a good four hundred yards away.

Joe's quick grasp of things proved invaluable. One sweeping glance had told him what was up, and now he was coaching like the passed master he was.

"Run, gol-darn ye, *run!* I'll tell ye when to stop!" he roared, and I heard and sprinted for dear life.

"Whoa! Yer fur—nuff—rite—top—ye!" he howled, in an agony of excitement, and I stiffened my legs and slid, ploughing snow for ten feet.

Puffing, twitching all over, I turned my head. Joe had timed it marvellously well. Barely twenty yards away was a noble gobbler, just stretching his long red legs to alight. I saw the huge speckled fans working convulsively, the gleam of the bronze, the drooping tassel, the snaky neck, and all. I should have taken my time, let him get running smoothly, and then cut the head off him as he ran.

I didn't. I just gave it to him midships, rattled in the second barrel, then ran and *sat* on him as hard as I could, and wished it was twice as hard — that's what I did!

As it happened I had hit him in the head, but it wasn't my fault! The second barrel scored him promiscuously; but, in spite of the storm of big shot, he was a truly grand bird.

When I dared get off him, I said he weighed twenty pounds. Joe said twenty-five. Before I had packed him a mile I said *fifty*.

Upon another occasion I went into the same woods alone. Fate was busy that day. At the very first bit of marsh, before even a fresh track was expected, a big turkey came flying directly toward me. I chanced to see him when he rose a long way off, and there was no need to stir a foot. It was the easiest and most perfect chance ever I had. He was up perhaps thirty yards, and his line of flight would have carried him exactly over my head. The picture he made will never be forgotten. Full in the dazzling sunshine he came, a perfect glory of gold and bronze and purple. He was magnificent as he bore down on the foe that he never saw. For a moment I thought of dropping the gun, waiting, and grabbing him by neck or leg — I have always regretted that I did not try it. The catch would indeed have been a unique experience, and I firmly believe it could have been accomplished. Instead, I cut his head off at about ten yards' range, and to do it cleanly I had to shift ground. He fell almost in my tracks, where I had stood.

Presently came a stoutish, country-looking fellow and a younger chap, following the bird. They made no claim, but greatly admired the

gobbler. A claim would have been useless, for I had heard no shot and the prize gave no sign of having been wounded. The larger of the two strangers said he had often heard of me, and would like to join me for the remainder of the day. What to do with the gobbler was the problem. Finally, the younger brother offered to carry in the turkey and have it ready at the depot when I got back. This was an easy solution of the trouble, so I promptly agreed, adding that it was a pity to spoil his day.

"Oh! *that* don't matter. I'm satisfied," he replied.

He was too! I hunted with the brother all the rest of the day, and late in the afternoon we got a chance and dropped a couple of small young hens. We might have got more, but I had a most important engagement for the following morning, and there was only one train to my destination.

"I won't disturb 'em for two days, if you'll come back; I like to hunt with you," said my bucolic friend. There and then I promised to return, and we set out best foot foremost for the depot. We made it by a narrow margin, and lo! there was neither boy nor gobbler.

"I'll go get it and be back in time; he's taken it to the house," said my new friend, as he darted away.

"This *is* a rum go!" I viciously exclaimed as

the whistle of the approaching train sounded. However, there was the train, and I *had* to take it, so I placed my gun in a seat and returned to the platform, hoping against hope. The wheels began to turn, and still no sign of the turkey or either party to what was now easily recognizable as a steal. I was hot clear through, and was just on the point of jumping off and hunting satisfaction, when through the dusk I saw a running figure carrying a turkey and making for the crossing some distance ahead.

"Bright fellow, that; he's been delayed a bit and has taken the one chance left," was my thought as I twisted a leg through the railing, for one had best be secure even on a slowly moving train. He had his eye on me and he timed himself to a hair. As the train slid past, gaining speed every instant, he swung the turkey and let it go. It came into my face like a cannon-ball inside of a feather pillow, and had I not been firmly fixed, it might have knocked me clear across the platform. However, it was securely held, and I took it inside, intending to gloat over it all the way home.

Somehow it felt *very* stiff and hard. Under the lights, while the train was running twenty-five miles an hour, it turned out to be a tame bird that had been dead and frozen for about a week! The whole game was at once apparent.

The request to stay over had merely been a feeler to make sure I would go; the brother had merely played that rôle and had taken my bird to the house where they were temporarily quartered; had I stayed, the right bird would, of course, have been produced. As it was, I got a ten-shilling fowl for a gobbler which I later heard brought fifteen dollars in Detroit, where my enterprising friends then belonged, the elder being a market hunter.

That happened quite a few years ago, but if ever I chance to be on a jury, and either of those rascals is charged with the theft of a Turkey rug, — nay, even a Turkish cigarette, — I'll hold out for a life sentence at least.

An illustration of the possibilities of shooting from ambush may serve as a parting shot at the turkey. I had gone to the Essex woods (in Ontario), expecting good tracking. Things, however, were all askew. The unreliable climate had taken one of its peculiar notions, and the low-lying woods were deeply flooded and the snow entirely gone. My host, a weather-wise old farmer, urged me to have patience and stay with him, as a cold snap was bound to come. It did, that very night, and next day all surface water was frozen, but not enough to bear a man. Hunting was out of the question until a heavy fall of snow came,

for walking in the woods was like stepping on splintering glass. After a bitter day, followed by a colder night, the ice was strong everywhere; but there was no tracking, and the woods were yet noisy. That night a young fellow called and told about a flock of turkeys which had been feeding for days on shelled corn, which had fallen from some car, and formed a heavy trail of grain for nearly three-fourths of a mile. The birds, he said, had found it, and for several days had come out to feed about three o'clock.

"Go down there to-morrow," said my host; "there's a big culvert will hide you, and if you take both rifle and gun, you'll be sure of one chance anyway."

Things dragged slowly about the house, and as my host was clearly worrying about the lack of sport, I decided to go. Shortly after noon I started. The trail of corn was easily found, and the sign indicated at least a fair flock of turkeys. But the conditions were rather awkward. Upon either side of the single track spread a sea of ice which extended far into the woods. The big culvert was filled to within a couple of feet of the top, which meant nearly six feet of water, and this appeared to be the only available hide. I did not greatly fancy it, but after a thorough test of the ice decided to try it. To collect a couple of bits of fence-rail and a big armful of dry weeds was

the work of a few minutes, and these formed a very comfortable seat. With gun and rifle conveniently placed, matters looked brighter, so I sat down and began the lonely vigil.

Crouching in a culvert, with one's eyes on the level of an air-line roadbed, is not very interesting, but when you can smoke, it is not unendurably bad. My old farmer was a true prophet, too, for in less than half an hour, behold! a turkey on the track some four hundred yards away. Others presently followed the first, and I could see the lot rapidly feeding in my direction. At once the prospect was glorified, — the old farmer was a trump, his friend was another; and I — well, I was the two bowers, the joker, and the four aces all in one hand. It was the surest thing ever tackled, and I grinned over the idea of letting them feed right up, getting one with the rifle, and then, hey! for a lightning change, and one more, maybe *two*, with the gun.

Things are not always what they seem, and best-laid plans sometimes are drawn for buildings to go on property to which the title is not clear. As I gloated, to my horror there sounded an ominous click, that unerring indication of a coming train. There came the remembrance of the fact that while there could be no passenger train, a freight was liable to come along any time. The old farmer had forgotten this, while I had never thought of

it. It was coming, and fast too, and I was in a stew of anxiety. Pretty soon the turkeys took heed of the clicking rail, and one after the other they trotted into the woods. Then I saw light. Of course they were accustomed to trains, so all I had to do was to lie flat under the cross-beam until the train had passed over me. It might be a bit unpleasant for a moment, but I would be absolutely safe. To leave the ambush would be folly, for it could not be done without exposing myself to the turkeys, and I knew better than to do that.

Long before the train got near me I was down flat, and feeling content, for the turkeys would surely come back as soon as quiet was restored. In fact, it was better to have the train come exactly when it did, for it added a spice of adventure, and there would be no other train before dark. I was feeling glad that I, the turkeys, and the train had all come, when, with an utterly indescribable roar, and a soul-scaring vibration, the engine passed over — just over! — my head. A man must try it to understand what it is like, and anybody is welcome to my future shares of it.

After the last demoniacal truck had cleared, and the gravel had ceased pelting, I began to sit up and take notice, and things gradually straightened themselves out. There had been no accident, no earthquake, no disturbance of any kind,

and the track was intact. I was glad of that, for there had been doubts upon several points.

Almost before I was ready, certainly before they were expected, back came the turkeys. Luck had indeed turned, for the nearest pair flew back and pitched less than two hundred yards away. These must have lit upon a spot from which the corn had previously been gleaned, for they actually *ran* in my direction, and what is more, the rest came chasing after them. Such luck was simply overpowering and almost awful to contemplate.

What! A single turkey out of a layout like that! Nay, nay! Not to take full advantage would be like flying in the face of Providence. I'd get two in line and have both at once with the rifle, then grab the gun and drop a couple more, maybe *three* if they bunched well. Nearer and nearer they came, till they were at the next telegraph pole below the one opposite the culvert. It was great! An open chance like this is good enough, but to shoot from a dead rest off the edge of a culvert at two turkeys in line is a "cinch"; but to have a telegraph pole by which to gauge the exact distance is almost too much.

Two turkeys! Fiddle-dee-dee-dee! I'd let 'em come within thirty yards, get *three* in line, tunnel through the lot; *then* for the gun, and why not two to each barrel. Good old Caution

whispered once in her feeble, pleading way, "Best tumble that big fellow, he's near enough; then rake 'em with the gun, for they'll huddle when they hear the shot."

Not at all! Caution *is* such a coward. A game man *never* fears — possibly what he don't know about. There was a grinding squeak, a heave as though some big sleeping animal were stirring under me — then I gave an imitation of a young man falling through a skylight and fetching up in the well!

To say there was pawing and at least one war-whoop would be feeble. The ice could not have been resting on the water, and presumably the weight of the guns and myself, helped by the vibration of the train, had proved too much. It was cold down in there too, but as I *was* in there was no use in leaving good weapons behind. What felt like a long winter of pawing finally brought up everything, and I ran for it.

What about the turkeys, do you ask?

Reader, I solemnly swear to you that the only decent turkey is a hot turkey. Cold turkey is a horror, unfit for publication or further discussion.

THE FLORIDA WILD TURKEY

(*M. s. osceola*)

Any one but an experienced naturalist would find it difficult to distinguish this from the pre-

ceding race. Even the scientist can only point to the general much darker cast of plumage, and the fact that the white bars upon the primaries are narrower and more broken, and not reaching the shaft of the feather, as in *Meleagris sylvestris*.

The size, eggs, and habits are about the same. The race is confined to Florida. Having no serious grudge against my reader, and not being anxious to inspire a wish that *my bars* were better defined, and that I were confined to a range narrower than Florida, there appears to be no pressing necessity for dwelling further upon this race.

ELLIOT'S RIO GRANDE TURKEY
(*M. s. ellioti*)

Confined to the wooded lowlands of eastern Mexico and southern Texas, this handsome bird is rightly considered a distinct race. The adult male, while in general appearance resembling *M. sylvestris*, has the back and rump jet black, and the upper tail-coverts broadly tipped with buff. The adult female is smaller than the male; general hue, black, with much metallic lustre; feathers of upper parts, tipped with gray, while those of the lower parts are tipped with buff.

THE MEXICAN TURKEY
(*Meleagris gallopavo*)

This fine species, while not so handsome as *M. sylvestris*, usually averages a trifle larger. Its

distinguishing mark is its conspicuous, whitish gray rump, which might be exactly matched in many a barnyard of this country and Europe. Nor is this to be wondered at, for from the Mexican turkey of older days came the domestic bird. While its general habits closely resemble those of our better-known race, it prefers higher altitudes, being found on the table-lands and mountains at an elevation varying from about three to ten thousand feet. The love-making, nesting, and behavior of the males need not be dwelt upon, as what has been said about *M. sylvestris*, male and female, will apply equally as well to this species. But bad husband and worse father that he is, we surely can forgive this bird his trespasses! Who are we, that, while bowing our thankful heads about the polished bier of his many times great-grandson, we should remember only his peccadilloes and forget the aching voids which he and his sons — more power to 'em — have so acceptably filled. Nay! even *overfilled*, as the soda might attest.

The range of the Mexican turkey includes southern and western Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and the table-lands of Mexico.

The exact date of the introduction of this bird into Europe is unfortunately unknown. The credit of having taken it to the West Indies islands probably belongs to the Spaniards, who

were then great sailors and traders. Soon after the big birds made their first appearance in Europe, attracting great attention in both France and England. An old rhyme says: —

> "Turkeys, carps, hoppes, pinaret and bear,
> Came into England all in one year."

This year is said to have been 1524. Hakluyt, writing in 1582, mentions "turkey cocks and hennes" as having been brought from foreign parts "about fifty years past." Why the fowl were called turkeys is unknown, the supposed origin of the name being the old-time belief that the birds came from Turkey. It appears to have been the fashion in those days to say that every imported novelty came from that country. The habit of crediting weird things to Turkey still prevails among certain vendors of tobacco, in cigarette and other forms. In 1541 the turkey is mentioned in a constitution of Archbishop Cranmer, by which it was ordered, that of such large fowls as cranes, swans, and turkey-cocks, "there should be but one in a dish." The sergeants-at-law, created in 1555, provided, according to Dugdale, in his *Origines Juridicales*, for their inauguration dinner, among other delicacies, two turkeys, and four turkey-chicks. These were rated at only four shillings each, while swans and cranes were ten shillings, and capons half-a-crown

which would suggest that turkeys were then rather common. In 1573 they were spoken of as part of the usual Christmas fare at a farmer's table. In 1535 turkeys were known in France, and mentioned by writers as having been brought there a few years previously from the newly discovered Indian islands. In 1566 a present of twelve turkeys was made by the municipality of Amiens to their king. They are said to have been known in Germany about 1530. In Venice, a law made in 1557 specified the tables at which they were permitted to be served.

A WOODLAND HERMIT

(The Woodcock)

THE AMERICAN WOODCOCK

(*Philohela minor*)

Adult male — Forehead, line over the eye, and entire lower parts; reddish tawny; between eye and bill an irregular, narrow line of umber; top of head, black, crossed with three narrow bands of pale buff; eye, large, set far back and high in skull; cheeks, marked with a blackish line; sides of neck, tinged with ash; primaries and secondaries, sooty black; rest of upper parts, beautifully variegated with brown, black, tawny, and gray; tail, black, the outer edge of the feathers spotted with brown; tips of tail-feathers, buffish above, white below; inside of wings, reddish tawny; legs, short, flesh color; weight, from five to six ounces. Total length, 10½ inches; bill, about 2¾ inches, brownish flesh color, darkening to black at tip, upper mandible broadening at tip and slightly longer than the lower.

Adult female — In general appearance like the male, but considerably larger and having all conspicuous markings somewhat paler; average length, about 12 inches; bill, about 3 inches; weight, from seven to eight ounces. Downy young, creamy buff, striped and mottled above with deep brown. Range, eastern United States; north, to Canadian provinces; west, to Dakota, Kansas, etc.

This peculiar and rightly highly prized bird is, perhaps, the least understood of all American feathered game. While most sportsmen would esteem a really good day's cock-shooting an ex-

perience to be talked of for years afterward, and a half-dozen brace of birds a present fit for the highest in the land, yet comparatively few of them know much about the cock, except during the open season.

I gravely suspect that there has been more nonsense written about the life, food, and habits of this bird than about any other American game, not even excepting the Carolina rail, or sora, *Porzana carolina*. Had I chanced to have kept a record of all questions concerning feathered game, probably one-half of them would have been about the woodcock, for to most men he is indeed a bird of mystery. Those who have followed him only to his summer haunts might even question his right to a place among upland game. To them he is a bird of wet woodlands, of the rich mud of creek beds and borders, of the swale and the morass. Those who have sweated through blazing summer days, have floundered amid the black, boggy tenacity of the lowlands, have fought brush and mosquitoes and breathed miasmatic vapors throughout the long agony of a July or August campaign, know little of the real pleasure of cock-shooting.

During the heated term, the bird of mystery certainly haunts just such places, and those who must hunt will find him therein. They

also will, if they be stanch workers, get home at night sweat to the crown and mud to the fork, and, possibly, bearing with them a brace or so of cock, a fair sample of headache, and a temper of from one-quarter to three-eighths of an inch long.

Summer cock-shooting is a very weak imitation of genuine sport. The birds then are in poor condition — moulting flutterers, merely able to weave a batlike flight through a tangle of sun-parched foliage. Very often, too, the man who is early afield, to avoid the full heat of the day, kills a few brace before mid-morning only to have them spoil on his hands before he can get them home. But in the autumn it is very different. Then the game forsakes his beloved mud and takes to the uplands, to the big fields of standing corn and the dry thickets, and there he may be found in all his glory, fat, strong, beautiful — in fine, what he should be when a sportsman draws trigger on him.

The bird of mystery, the big-eyed king of the copse, must be followed from South to North and back again before his seemingly baffling movements are revealed in their real simplicity. In the first place, he comes North very early, frequently before the snow has entirely gone. I have found birds (in Ontario) in southerly ex-

posed thickets while the remains of snowdrifts yet occupied many of the northerly slopes. An old field-book shows that the first cock of one year was seen on the 6th of March, and an entry two years later mentions a bird on the 8th of that month. These early birds come North either during, or immediately after, a spell of mild weather, and, not infrequently, too early arrivals have to endure a final cold snap. I have flushed solitary birds which appeared extremely dull and weak, presumably owing to lack of food. These birds certainly came North several days before the frost was out of the ground, hence before they could get at their favorite food, *i.e.* worms. At such times the woodcock busies himself in turning over the damp, dead leaves beneath which he finds occasional grubs, larvæ, and worms — at least sufficient to maintain life until a happier day arrives.

When once the frost is out, the worms work up to and near the surface, and the cock is enabled to feast at his leisure. An exploded theory, once believed by old-time sportsmen, was that the cock lived by what they termed "suction" — that he thrust his long bill into the moist earth and sucked up some form of liquid nourishment. This belief was strengthened by the custom of cooking the bird with the intestines, or "trail,"

as they were termed, still within the body. This "trail" was esteemed a great delicacy. It looks like a snarl of whitish twine, and when the epicure brings it to light, it usually is accompanied by a stomach-like pouch, which almost invariably contains more or less fine sand, or gritty earth. Finding this and nothing else, and having seen the marks, "borings," left by the bird's bill in the mud, and the dried mud upon the bill itself, the wise men of old promptly decided that the bird fed upon mud, and mud of peculiar properties, inasmuch as it imparted to the flesh a most acceptable delicacy and richness. The earthy matter, of course, had been inside the worms, which had disappeared, owing to rapid digestion.

The fact of the matter is that the cock not only eats worms, but stows away an astonishing quantity of them. I have not only seen a big worm escaping from the throat of a bird just killed, but I have "dug bait" for a tame woodcock, who was as exorbitant in his demands as any old man going fishing. When feeding the bird referred to, I placed a good handful of worms on some black loam which covered the bottom of an earthenware dish. An inch or so of loam was sprinkled over the worms, a little water splashed over the whole, and then Master *P. minor* was allowed to manage for himself. This he cleverly did, by

thrusting his bill deep into the mess, feeling for the prey with the wonderfully sensitive and flexible tip of the upper mandible, and grasping it without the slightest trouble. When his bill was buried to almost its entire length, he frequently seemed to be sucking, as sometimes a minute bubble would appear at the angle of his mouth. So far as could be observed, he sucked down some worms and drew others entirely from the mud and then swallowed them. Occasionally, he would give his bill a quick flirt to one side and reject one of those yellow-bellied, red-ringed worms, so abundant about old manure-piles. I never intentionally offered him one of those worms, but boys frequently brought both sorts in the one can. As I never saw him eat one of them, and never saw him reject a true garden worm, I concluded that he did not fancy the manure brand of fare. Yet I have often, at night, flushed a cock from a damp spot near the stable, where the ringed, evil-smelling worms were amazingly plentiful. Possibly they are occasionally eaten, but I suspect that a few garden worms in the same spot were the real attraction.

An intelligent examination of a woodcock will prove him to be a most interesting example of nature's wisdom in planning to meet certain conditions. His chief food is angleworms, for which he must do much probing and feeling in the soft

ground they prefer. Hence his bill is shaped so it will easily enter mud; it is long, that it may go far enough; and it is equipped with a system of nerves which make it (like the trunk of an elephant) so sensitive that it can at once distinguish between a real worm and a wormlike root, and even between worms of different sorts. When the bird is boring forehead-deep in the mud, he, necessarily, is crouched. An ordinary bird, in this position, either would have its eyes in direct contact with the mud, or so near it that they would be unable to see anything near by, especially any prowling foe planning a rear attack. To avoid this dangerous handicap, the cock's eyes are placed near the upper rear corners of his squarish skull, an arrangement which not only keeps the eyes above the mud, but enables the bird to see, without raising its head, whatever may be transpiring above and behind. Furthermore, the big, beautiful eyes are owl-like in their power to utilize the faintest of lights, and thus enable the cock to travel and feed at will in the damp, moonless nights when the wormy prey is upon or near the surface of the ground.

If the feeding of the woodcock could be carefully studied, we might learn some very interesting things. This much I know. In addition to the characteristic turning over of moist leaves during March and early April, and the boring in

muddy spots, the cock also is a surface feeder, both on damp and almost dry ground. Being chiefly nocturnal in his habits, and given to dozing the long days through, snug-hid in the velvet shade of cool lush growths, he often flies far through the dusk from the day cover to the feeding ground.

More frequently than most people imagine, his explorations extend to the hearts of large towns and cities, where trim gardens and broad lawns form attractive hunting grounds. It is no uncommon thing for some early-rising citizen to find a dead or wing-broken cock upon the lawn or street walk. Birds so found have fouled a wire while speeding to or from some garden rich in worms. The reason for the cock's visits to town is the same which caused some historic old cocks to put on their thinking-caps, namely, the diet of worms. Rich, well-tended gardens furnish what Kipling calls "good hunting," and this the outlying cock in some mysterious manner knows. He also knows that it is one of the customs of the country to have heavy dews fall some nights, while it also is a custom of the citizens of the country to sprinkle their lawns during that easy period after dinner when the sun has ceased from scorching, and the pleasure, or business weary may best enjoy the strenuous life of him who holds the markets of the metropolis in one hand

and in the other sufficient American Rubber to form a serpentine and slightly leaky garden hose.

I do not know how many boys may understand the poetry of digging bait. This is it. When you want to go fishing next morning, or when the pater wants to go, and tells you to procure bait or expect trouble — *don't dig!* Digging is hard and frequently uncertain work. Instead, volunteer to sprinkle the lawn, and give it a thorough soaking — sufficient water means success. About midnight, take a strong light and go over the wetted surface, and you will find worms a-plenty crawling through the grass, and they will be the fattest and finest kind of worms too — in fact, such worms as the woodcock knows he will find when he makes a flying trip to the freshly watered lawn.

Another interesting point is this. An old (colored) naturalist once told me that the cock danced on the ground and often tapped with the tip of his bill to make the worms come to the surface. This I did not then believe, but a riper experience has taught me that there frequently is a trace of truth in many apparently ridiculous statements.

While many people know that a heavy blow upon the ground — like the stroke of a spade — will cause near-by worms to shrink deeper into their tunnels, perhaps not so many are aware

that a light tapping may bring the same worms to the surface. A veteran poacher once told me that when he wanted easy worms during a dry spell, he first soaked a likely spot with a few bucketfuls of water, then tapped the wet spot all over with a light switch. The only reason he had for the tapping was that his father always did it.

This set me to thinking, and the natural solution of the apparent mystery was that the poured water, percolating downward through the holes, notified the worms that it was raining up above — hence a good time for them to rise to the surface. The tapping of the switch was an imitation of the patter of falling drops and a confirmatory message to the worms. Following this theory, we boys of the old brigade never merely upset our water pails, but held them high and caused the water to spatter like rain; and after that we lightly and rapidly tapped the ground all over with a switch. And we *got worms!* It may be that the woodcock's instinct tells him to both dance and tap the ground to induce the worms to come within reach. Other creatures do stranger things than this.

To return to the newly arrived bird in early spring. After a reliable food supply has become assured, the next important business is to secure a mate. Those who would study the wooing of this bird must spend the April twilight and

evening in his haunts. Through the soft, damp air comes a sudden squeaking cry, not unlike the reedy sound emitted by some of the animal toys of the children. It is followed by the well-known and musical twittering, which must not be confounded with that other whistling of the air passing through the feathers of the wing. The squeaking is uttered both while the bird is upon the ground and when flying. It is not unlike the cry of the night-hawk, for which bird the cock might, in the dusk, easily be mistaken, were it not for the fact that the hawk does not begin his airy play until some time after the woodcock has mated.

My favorite ground for observation was a huge level pasture, which was bounded on two sides by woodland and thickets. Above this open the woodcock played evening after evening, and it was no unusual thing to see a male wavering past within a few yards. First would sound the squeak from the shadow of the timber, then the whistle of the wings as the bird left the ground, and then I would see the dark form of the bird weaving to and fro, often at great speed. After some preliminary darting about, during which he occasionally uttered the rasping squeak, he would begin to tower — up and up, till he seemed far above the tallest trees, and could be located only by his twittering whistle; then he

would dive like a night-hawk, slanting sometimes for several hundred feet. Birds so occupied appeared to dive at random in any direction, but most of them eventually worked back toward their original rising-points — presumably because the object of their devotion was somewhere in that vicinity. The love-making of the Wilson's snipe is somewhat similar.

The nest, frequently found in a low-lying maple thicket, consists of a few dry leaves drawn together on the ground. The four pear-shaped eggs are buff, spotted with reddish brown, and considerably larger than a novice would expect from the size of the bird. The young are tottery little things, able to run feebly as soon as dry. They sometimes make what seems like a half-hearted attempt at hiding, but at both running and hiding they lack the nervous speed and cleverness of such spry small rascals as young quail or grouse.

The mother, surprised with the young, makes no great demonstration, usually fluttering up amid the saplings and down again at no great distance. On such occasions I have heard her utter a low quacking sound, once or twice repeated. If the discoverer of the young will retreat and conceal himself at some point from which he can observe the subsequent proceedings, he *may* see the female return and remove the young one at a time. This I have not seen done in the case

of *four* youngsters, but I have good reason to believe that I have seen *one* carried off. The nest in question was on a bit of level ground amid tall trees. The sole suggestion of cover was a lot of flattened leaves which lay as the snow had left them. Perhaps ten yards away was an old rail fence about waist-high, and on the farther side of it was a clump of tall saplings. A man coming out of the wood told me he had just flushed a woodcock and had seen her brood, recently hatched, and pointed out where they were. I went in to investigate, and located one young bird crouched on the leaves. It ran a few steps and again crouched, evidently not yet strong enough for any sustained effort. I went off, and hid behind a stump, to await developments. From this shelter the young bird was visible and it made no attempt to move. Presently the old one came fluttering back, alighted near the youngster, and walked to it. In a few moments she rose and flew low and heavily, merely clearing the fence, and dropping perhaps ten yards within the thicket. Her legs appeared to be half-bent, and so far as I could determine the youngster was held between them. Something about her appearance reminded me of a thing often seen — a shrike carrying off a small bird. I carefully marked her down, then glanced toward where the youngster had been. It was no longer there;

and a few moments later it, or its mate, was found exactly where the mother had gone down. She flushed and made off in the usual summer flight. These details are dwelt upon because many writers have disputed the carrying of the young. My impression is that the bird had removed the other children before I got to the place. The one found, however, was alone, and the others were not located. They certainly were not beside the one, but the search for them was brief, owing to the fact that there was a nasty possibility of stepping on them.

The feeding of the downy young I have not seen, so the next step must be to the soft ground of almost dried creek beds and swales where the young do their own boring. Here begins the early cock-shooting, and the man who fancies such easy marks is welcome to them. The conditions are all against enjoyable sport, or shooting which will be any great test of marksmanship. As a rule there is a lot of thick cover about, which shuts off what light breeze there may be, while in many creek beds a harsh, keen-edged grass grows abundantly. In this a good dog is bound to suffer — in fact, in my opinion, the game is not worth the candle. If a man *must* do it, he had best depend upon a tough, bustling spaniel, for beating muddy ground upon a sultry day is a mighty poor occupation for a setter or

pointer worthy of the name. In many parts of the country, notably upon the sides of the Pennsylvania mountains, there are peculiar wet spots, frequently of considerable extent. These spots occur precisely where one naturally would expect dryness, and there usually is more or less dense, leafy cover about them. On such ground, one is apt to find a fair number of birds during July and August.

About September most of the small creeks, which afforded excellent boring earlier in the season, have become too dry. Then the cock are very apt to betake themselves to large fields of green corn. In this tall cover there frequently is very pretty snap-shooting, and a man can work his pointer, or setter, to advantage. A bell on the dog, tied to his neck with a string which will *not* sustain the dog's weight, is no bad wrinkle.

The wise man, beating a field of tall corn, will not falsely judge its promise because it happens to appear pretty dry. There may be — nay, there frequently is — a low-lying and much damper acre or so near the centre and hidden by the corn. Such a bit often affords choice feeding. And even a dusty, dry field may happen to be the day resort of half the birds in the neighborhood. The cock not infrequently pass the day in such fields, and fly far and wide to feed at dusk. Therefore, it is well to work through the field and keep

a keen eye upon the ground for the two infallible signs, the borings and the droppings, the latter showing distinctly like drops of whitewash on the ground.

In a corn-field the borings may be scattered or in clusters, the latter arrangement suggesting that the probing bill had found "pay dirt" — otherwise, wormy ground. The appearance of the borings is unlike worm-holes or any other holes, of which many may show. The woodcock's sign looks as though somebody had thrust a slim pencil again and again — perhaps a dozen times in a spot a foot square — into the ground. The arrangement of the holes may be roughly circular, in lines, or scattered, but their presence attests that one or more birds spent some time at the spot. Quite often there will be no borings whatever in the open spaces between the rows of corn, while close about the roots the soil may be riddled. And it is well to remember that one or two birds sometimes make an astonishing number of holes, and also that birds *may* feed in a certain field, yet not remain there during the day. I have seen ground riddled like the bottom of a colander, yet never a bird in that field. Then is the time to climb the fence and take a look at the surroundings, for an adjacent bit of heavy woods or a thicket may be well worth a visit. A useful rule, too, when a heavy rain follows a dry spell, is

to visit the fields the next morning, bright and early. The birds know that the rain will bring up the erstwhile deeply buried worms, and that the corn lands will offer the fattest of foraging.

It is possible to *make* good woodcock ground in an afternoon, or even within a couple of hours, if you are sufficiently energetic. A teaspoonful of whiting and some water in a handy bottle — well shaken before takin' — makes most excellent droppings, while a pencil, or stiff twig, cannot be beaten in the line of borings. Once there was a man, a highly conceited, extremely self-assertive man, the kind of man to whom nobody on earth can teach anything, and he knew all about woodcock. One day he happened to flush a cock in a field quite near town, and he swore he flushed six. Early next morning another man, and an evil man withal, slipped to that field and killed the lone bird before half-past seven. There were about enough borings to make one colander, which showed that a solitary bird had happened into the field, and not six, as the fork-tongued man had sworn. Whereupon the misled man waxed wroth, and he took a small cold bottle and the hottest kind of a hot bird, *i.e.* a foot of fence-wire, and he made that corn-field look as if a hundred thousand ten-ounce woodcock were given to boring and chalking the same. And after office-hours came the fork-tongued man cautiously

hasting, gun in hand and dog at heel, and cocksure, and he went to work, and he remained at work. Neither the *one* he saw, nor the *six* he said he saw, were in the cover — and so he beat the dog for a no-good brute, and went home exceeding wrathful. And the next day and also the next — but why linger?

The operation of corn-cutting, of course, ruins the cover and drives the birds to adjacent woods and thickets, where they may be found until some cold snap sends them hastening southward. The brief season immediately after the leaves have fallen brings the cream of the cock-shooting. Then a good dog can range at will, and any one of the swift, plump birds he may point is well worth a dozen of the moulting weaklings of the earlier season. While I consider a mixed bag the best possible of the autumn, there are few field experiences to compare with one of those too rarely granted Indian summer days, when one finds long strips of leafless thicket containing anywhere from fifteen to thirty prime woodcock. Many of such thickets of western Ontario have furnished the crowning triumph of a glorious day, and if the mighty voice of Niagara could be softened to a confidential whisper, it *might* tattle of rare doings in its trembling gorge, when the gay maples flaunted their splendors which the sly mist strove to veil.

The gun for woodcock is the twelve-gauge — the quail-gun, and the same load answers for both birds; indeed, I once made twin loads *answer* for both birds. The quail had gone to cover, from which a cock and a quail rose almost side by side, affording a seldom-granted double.

Good cock-shooting is now almost a thing of the past in many places where heavy bags used to be the rule. The heaviest bag ever I saw was sixty-odd to two guns in one day, scored by two market hunters near Lake St. Clair. Walpole Island, in the same water system, used to be a famous cock ground. It is quite possible that a belt of country a few miles wide and extending entirely around Lake St. Clair, would contain as many cock as any other area of equal mileage in the North. Extensive drainage, backed by too close shooting, has played havoc with leagues upon leagues of what formerly were the strongholds of this choice game.

BARTRAM'S SANDPIPER — UPLAND PLOVER

(*Bartramia longicauda*)

Adult — Crown, nape, back, and scapulars, black, feathers edged with buff; hind neck, sides of head, and neck, buff, streaked with dark brown; lesser wing-coverts, light brown, barred with black and buff; greater coverts, dark brown, barred on inner web, edged and tipped with white; primaries, dark brown, edged with creamy white; lower back, rump, and central tail-coverts, black; rest of coverts, black at base, remainder, buff, barred with black and white; central feathers of tail, gray, barred with black; other tail-feathers, buff, with black spots and bar near tip, which is white; entire under parts, buff, irregularly barred with dark brown on breast and flanks; lower breast, showing a few V-shaped dark markings; bill, sooty brown, lighter at base; legs and feet, olive, tinged with yellow. Length, 12 inches; wing, 6½; tarsus, 2. Range, eastern North America to Nova Scotia; westward to the Rockies, and north to the Yukon valley. Its southward migration extends to the Argentine Republic and Peru. Occasionally taken in Europe and Australia.

In all probability more than a few American sportsmen will fail at first glance to recognize the proper name of this choice game-bird. To them it is the "upland plover" and nothing more.

A non-sporting critic, too, might question the propriety of including a bird of the name in this volume, but those familiar with the species will readily understand why it is given place among its present company. We are accustomed to connect barelegged birds of this type with wading, or at least with trotting the beaches and the margins of streams and ponds; but the present species, except during the nesting season, evinces no great love for water, or even marshy localities. Naturally a haunter of plains and uplands, it is seldom seen within a gunshot of water; in fact, from its habits, one naturally would classify it with the plovers, rather than the sandpipers. Among its common names are "gray" and "grass plover"; in the West, "prairie-pigeon," and, among the Creoles of Louisiana, "papabotte." On the principle that "A rose by any other name will smell as sweet," this sandpiper, by any other name (and it is a much-named bird), is just as good to eat. Any one who has tasted a bird in prime condition knows why this species is eagerly pursued, for in truth it is a dainty not to be overlooked. I have even heard men of considerable epicurean taste declare that they prefer it to the woodcock, which, while perhaps going a bit too far, would suggest that the dainty of the uplands is by no means to be despised.

To see this bird at its best one must go to the big grass states, from Illinois and Kansas, southward to Texas. In portions of the last-named state it frequently is seen in great flocks, the like of which are unknown in the East. Some twenty years ago, in a corner of Illinois, I saw more "gray plover," as they were then called, than could be counted by any one short of a lightning calculator. Such a spectacle was perhaps never seen much farther East, even in localities where the plover is deemed a very common bird.

In regions much shot over, which means the bird's eastern range, it is by no means an easy quarry; in fact, it seldom allows itself to be approached within the reliable range of even a fine gun. One may see hundreds running about, or standing motionless and sharply defined above the grass, and yet fail to make anything like a heavy bag. Old settlers have told me that in the early days of settlement on the plains, the birds were almost fearless, and their incessant scolding at an intruder was at times positively annoying; but when my day in the West began there was very little of that sort of thing. The sandpiper seemed to have acquired a very useful idea concerning the range of modern firearms, and only in the spring and while the young were unable to fly did the older birds betray any reck-

lessness in the matter of allowing a man to approach them.

It is a very active bird, running smoothly and rapidly when in the humor and flying with dovelike speed. Like its distant relative, the small, spotted sandpiper, it will not hesitate to alight upon a fence, pile of boards, or outbuilding. The nest is merely a slight depression in the ground, roughly lined with a few blades of grass. The four eggs are very large, the ground color grayish buff, with spots of dark brown and grayish brown. They are hatched in June, and shortly after the young are seen running totteringly over the grass. They make a feeble attempt at hiding, but are practically helpless and altogether comical-looking spindle-shanked affairs. The mother is a most devoted parent, keeping up a shrill appeal, simulating lameness, and even plunging in a threatening manner about one's head. When the birds have mated in numbers, the outcry of one starts all the rest to scolding, and the din they raise can be heard afar. The food of this species is chiefly insectivorous. Vast numbers of grasshoppers and crickets are consumed, and also berries of various sorts. Toward the end of the summer it leaves the grass and takes to the cultivated lands for a period. Before the end of September most of the small flocks unite and move southward.

Some of the finest sport it has been my lot to enjoy with this bird was upon those rare days when the plover of a large area appeared to be posted singly and many yards apart. I have seen a bit of prairie about a mile square, dotted all over with motionless and observant birds, and these so evenly distributed that they might have posed for so many decoys. Under such conditions, it occasionally happens that a man on foot can have some very pretty shooting. But there is no such thing as a very close approach. The average "rise" probably would be about thirty-five yards, at which distance only a quick man, aided by a hard-shooting gun, can hope to score at all uniformly. Upon such a day, too, the great majority of chances will be quartering shots, for the birds seem to prefer to keep their enemy plainly in view. This, of course, means that the gun must be well ahead of the mark and kept at an even swing. In fact, the sport bears no slight resemblance to live bird shooting at the traps. The plover gets away smartly and is soon at top speed, and the top speed of this bird is no poor imitation of fast flying. But, unfortunately, such days are all too few, the general rule being that these scattered birds flush almost beyond range and fly to a considerable distance before pitching. This necessitates a deal of walking, and encourages

that undesirable thing, *i.e.* shooting when the game is beyond the reliable killing zone of the gun, and the consequent wounding of birds which never will be gathered.

A popular method in many parts of the West is to drive to the birds in a buckboard, or other convenient rig. For a man who can shoot well in the sitting posture this is an excellent plan, as the birds almost invariably will permit a wheeled conveyance to approach within comparatively easy range. A clever driver is a valuable assistant. Such a man never heads his team directly at the birds, but drives as though he merely intended to pass them by. A good judge of distance in the open can in this way edge within comfortable range of plover which, if the driver steered straight for them, or the gun attempted to dismount and stalk, would at once make off. I have varied the shooting from the seat by walking at the horse's shoulders. The plover do not appear to notice the extra pair of legs. This sometimes gives the prettiest kind of shooting. All one has to do is to judge when sufficiently close, then stand still with the gun at the ready, while the team moves steadily ahead. Usually the plover will take wing the moment the footman is uncovered; but should they not, the man can gain a few yards by briskly walking

toward them. I have occasionally stalked them by keeping close to the shoulder of a steady old horse that was indifferent in the matters of smoke and loud reports. A reliable nag, equipped with some inconspicuous form of halter and guide-line, is a very useful assistant when birds are too wary for ordinary scouting tactics. Occasionally, sudden heavy rains flood big meadows, and thus furnish attractive temporary quarters for ducks and waders of various sorts. In such emergencies the horse may prove an almost invaluable assistant. A cow of sedate temperament is a possibility in the same line, but she seldom is so easy to control as the superior animal. In the olden days, an artificial stalking horse frequently was called into service; and it is quite possible that a colt out of that ancient steed still might prove useful upon ground which has been much used as pasture.

The fluting of this sandpiper is sweet, far-reaching, and somewhat deceptive. Quite often it is distinctly heard falling from an apparently wingless sky. A good pair of eyes, fixed upon the quarter indicated by the cry, may presently detect a motelike form lazily floating in the distant blue. This drifting flight is characteristic of the present species, and it usually ends in a diving slant earthward, which is per-

THE GAME-BIRD OF THE UNIVERSE

(Upland Plover)

formed without any perceptible motion of the wings. A few feet from the ground the long, beautifully easy descent is gently checked, and the bird alights as quietly as though it had stooped only a yard or so instead of hundreds or thousands of feet. For a few seconds after alighting the bird is apt to keep its wings considerably elevated above its back, and the brief pose in this position is particularly attractive. Then the airy fans are sedately furled. This pretty trick of keeping the wings spread as if for a momentary study of how they should be correctly folded is not peculiar to this species. Others of its near and remote kin go through the same dainty evolution, although, perhaps, without the air of studied care which is characteristic of Bartram's sandpiper.

While the excellence of this bird for the table is universally acknowledged, it would appear that a sojourn in Louisiana is necessary to bring it to the greatest perfection. A certain Creole, himself an amateur *chef* of no uncertain standing, has often assured me that the "papabotte," *à la Louisiana*, is the daintiest morsel that ever tickled an appreciative palate, not even excepting a prime woodcock. His argument is that the peculiar excellence of the papabotte, like that of the canvasback, is merely a matter of diet, and that the papabotte, while

in Louisiana, feeds upon a certain insect which imparts to the flesh a flavor calculated to make a man forget his troubles, his appointments, and everything that is his.

THE GOLDEN PLOVER

(*Charadrius dominicus*)

Adult male (*summer plumage*) — Entire upper parts, black, spotted all over with golden yellow and white; wing-coverts, sooty brown, with a few spots of yellow and white; primaries, brown, shafts, whitish; upper tail-coverts, black, with irregular golden bars; tail, brownish gray, with white bars, and flecked with yellowish; across the forehead, above the eyes, and down the sides of the neck, extends a broadening white line until it joins the white sides of the breast, which in turn merge into white flanks; sides of head, neck, and all lower parts to under tail-coverts, jet black, with golden spots along the edge of the black of breast and flanks; under tail-coverts, white; bill, black, one inch long; legs and feet, lead color. Length, about 10 inches; wing, 7; tarsus, $1\frac{1}{2}$. In the winter plumage, the under parts are white, or whitish, with a few brownish and black mottlings. The adult female is like the male, but slightly paler and less decided in all conspicuous markings. Range, the Americas, from the Arctic regions to Chili and Patagonia.

The golden plover, "green plover," "golden-back," "frost-bird," etc., has the same claim to recognition among upland game as has been advanced in behalf of the preceding species. As it breeds in the far north and spends the winter so far south, it is a migrant so far as this

country is concerned, passing northward in the spring and returning southward bound in the fall. While frequently seen in numbers along the coast and about the shores of the Great Lakes, especially during the spring flight, it also is a common bird of the great plains, pastures, and fields of the dry interior in early autumn. It reaches Alaska and other northern points during May. The nest is a roughly lined hollow in any convenient growth of moss or grass, and the usual number of eggs is four. They are yellowish buff, spotted with reddish brown. During average seasons, the golden plover is apt to appear in the latitude of Illinois, western Ontario, etc., between the 1st and the 15th of October, but the time of arrival is subject to considerable variation, as are the yearly visits of the birds. I have seen thousands of them one season, and perhaps a few scattering specimens, or none at all, for several successive years. When found thinly dispersed over big pastures and fields, the golden plover frequently affords capital sport, but when large flocks are the rule, the quality of the sport is questionable if that of the slain is not. Golden plover shooting at such times is not unlike what wild pigeon shooting used to be, *i.e.* something closely akin to mere butchery. A few years ago a huge flock swept down upon me, and their unexpected ap-

pearance so astonished me that fourteen fine fellows fell to two barrels. Needless to say, this was in no sense sport, and my sole excuse for the outrage is that I thought the flock was travelling, and unlikely to offer another chance.

A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

To slip away from grinding Gotham, from the roar and the clatter and the ceaseless jar of it all, is no bad medicine for a weary writer, and I was taking my medicine with a childish swallowbility most beautiful to behold.

The quiet Ontario parsonage somewhat resembled a fat old dormouse working overtime; but nevertheless it was no bad place to be. The night silence was almost appalling and I lay like a scared child in the dark, afraid to cry out and too utterly forsaken to think of going to sleep.

A big apple — soulless and criminally irresponsible — fell with a crash upon a distant, hollow roof, then slowly trundled and fell again to earthy silence. It was absolutely terrifying. Then there came a mysterious rustling, a feeling of a myriad searching fingers, a vague sniffing here and there and everywhere — exactly what might have been caused by a monstrous blue tiger with a pale pink tail — and I sat up!

What had happened? The L-road was silent as an ancient tomb! The surface system was paralyzed! There was never a gong, nor a metal shoe striking a cobble; it was awful! Then came a gasping whisper, then another and another. That settled it! There was some tremendous fire down town and everything was tied up, and somebody in my room, or the next, had been left to die alone. I could hear his, or her, soul sliding out between the set teeth, and not caring to have even some stranger's soul get lost, I proceeded to get up.

At this instant came another sound. Evidently the suffering soul had got away and was now wishing itself safe back again, for there came a slow, solemn, lost-forever sort of wailing — an Æolian brand of dead march, in which every string was busy and a fair breeze pledged by the weather bureau. In it was every known note of grief unmeasured, from the hopeless misery of a child irrigating a broken doll, to the staider and better sustained effort of Rachel mourning for her children, with a dash of banshee at the bottom of the cup of sorrow. Sweetly solemn, wildly sad as it was, it was very welcome, for those same old pines had whispered my cradle-song in the tow-headed past.

Some few moments later, as it seemed to me, the venerable family horse took a stroll through

the hall and began kicking at my door. If it was the horse, it could give Balaam's ass weight for age and flag him, for presently it said, —

"I say — you in there — I say-ay!"

Only one man on earth was allowed to use that peculiar drawling "I sa-ay" and live, and the sound of it woke me like a splash of cold water.

"That you, Joe? Come in!" I shouted, wondering meanwhile how the deuce he had got there.

The door opened, and a brown, foxy face, fringed with grizzly whiskers, was inserted with about the same amount of confidence that a fox would betray while examining a poorly set trap.

"I say — *you're* pretty dom comfortable, ain't you now — I sa-ay — ain't you now? I say, I seed the guv'nor outside, an' he told me to come up — I sa-ay, he told me to come up. Get up out of that, you lazy devil! — I say, get up out of that!"

A curious, but a rare good, fellow was Joe, and a mighty hunter withal. Some vague number of years before he had been smitten, in England, with a peculiar, sometimes contagious, disease which he pronounced "powching," but which others pronounced "poaching."

Born with his full share of sporting blood, which later developed a passion for shooting, the sturdy young Briton also had a useful stock of

sound common sense. While he rebelled against the severity of British game laws, he thoroughly understood their meaning; and he knew that sooner or later a man of his calibre was bound to run foul of them and get into serious trouble. So he wisely concluded to take his doctor's advice and try the effect of a trip over sea. Rugged as a gnarled oak, and plucky as one of his favorite black-red stags, he had no fears, and no sooner had he got settled in Ontario than he realized what grand sporting possibilities were open to him. After locating upon a tidy little farm a few miles from Lake St. Clair, he wisely devoted himself to market gardening and sport. The river and lake were full of black bass and other fish; deer and turkey were within easy reach; quail swarmed almost everywhere; while waterfowl, shore-birds, cock, snipe, and hares added to sport the like of which he had dreamed of, but never enjoyed.

To such a man, the new land was like a homestead in Paradise, and his early training served him nobly under the altered conditions. A fairly good shot and an indefatigable worker, he soon attained renown as one of the best men afield in three sporting counties. By training a close observer, his shrewd little gray eyes missed nothing, and I question if there was a man in his part of the country who knew more about the

ways of wild things. Always frankly jolly toward those whom he fancied, he was the best of guides and comrades to whomever was so fortunate as to find favor in his eyes. He was a bit careful about the men he asked to share his sport, and he hated a bluffer or a shirker as he hated a blank day. Woe betide the officious know-it-all, or the man who boasted about his prowess and failed to make good. Joe would take him out once and take his measure with an accuracy that would make the Bertillon system appear like guesswork. Joe's "I say he's no good, I sa-ay he's a quitter" forever settled it.

His treatment of such a man was characteristic. Never a word of fault-finding, or anything like discourtesy, although there surely would be some quaint if not blistering badinage. Joe's rule was to thoroughly size his man the first day, and then treat him according to his deserts. The man found wanting in the necessary gameness for the stiffest of tramps was liable to long remember his *second* day. So surely as Joe took him out, so surely would he be led to the slaughter.

Quaking bogs, creeks, the deepest of mud, and the densest of cover were his certain portion. Through it all the iron veteran would unflinchingly pilot his victim, and the bag would be the worst possible. Nightfall would find them three or four miles deep in the roughest going, and the

final homeward tramp was something the victim never forgot. Then Joe would bundle him into his trap, and start him homeward with a polite invitation to have another day soon. Needless to say that day never came, for nothing could induce that particular subject to apply for a second treatment.

Those who really knew Joe, however, appreciated his sterling worth. Loyal and game to the core, the real man was a friend worth having, for he scorned all affectation and treachery, and the grip of his strong hand meant precisely what a manly handclasp should mean. I have shot with many men of various walks in life, but I have yet to meet his superior in those valuable qualifications — sound common sense, shrewd, dry humor, bulldog courage, and all-round knowledge of his craft.

The first time I shot with him, I got it, as everybody else did. It was in spring, and he had me out about two hours before daylight to try for geese. By nine o'clock the flight was over, and a bit of snipe-shooting followed. Through the mud we went for miles, shooting, reloading, gathering, always on our feet in heavy mud. The lunch was a standing function, for the nearest dry seat was afar at the edge of the dim forest line. Not till the red sun touched the marsh did the veteran (he was then past middle age) turn home-

ward. We were both heavily laden, and pounds of mud clung to our waders. When finally easier going was reached, we waded into a ditch and got rid of the mud. For a mile the walking was easier, but I was fast curling up when the sight of the house spurred me to a desperate effort.

"I say, them long shanks had enough — I sa-ay — they had enough?" queried Joe, as we reached his gate. His face was gray with weariness, but the sharp little eyes twinkled defiantly. Needless to say "them long shanks" had had *more* than enough — in fact, we both fell sound asleep in our chairs before supper could be prepared. If Arthur of sainted memory had a harder job in winning his spurs, I can readily understand why he died so long ago!

It has been my fate to hunt with three extraordinary men of the same name: Joe, the Indian, or rather "breed," of ptarmigan fame; that other Joe, of the turkey tracking; and this one. Three better men in their respective lines never tramped from dawn till dusk, and if there be dim trails in the Happy Hunting Grounds, there will be Joes to the fore, for these were men among men.

But to return to my early visit and its object. Of course, it was shooting. Joe had reached town by gray dawn, had disposed of a load of produce, and was ready to go home. He was a bit impatient, too, which was a good sign; but he

vouchsafed no further information than a statement that he knew where there were some birds. In about an hour we were driving smartly down river over an excellent road. We chatted of many things, but I got no information concerning the game. Near Joe's house was a huge pasture, and as we passed this he rose to his feet, and stared over the acres of close-cropped grass.

"I say — they're there — I sa-ay, we'll get em!" was his somewhat startling remark.

I didn't see anything, and ventured, "Get *what?*"

"G'lang!" said he to the team, and in a few minutes we pulled up at the gate, where one of Joe's sturdy sons took charge of the nags.

"I say — hustle now — I sa-ay — hustle!" remarked Joe, as he darted into the house for his outfit.

In brief time we were ready, and he hurried along the road, finally halting at the corner of the big pasture.

"I say — yonder they be — I sa-ay, yonder they be — a thousand of 'em."

I looked at what at first glance appeared to be a great, deserted pasture dotted with queer-looking tufts of dried weeds. The ground was bone dry, so I knew no late snipe were to be expected. Quail would not remain in such a place during the hours Joe had been away, and I could think

of nothing else. The veteran chuckled in his own inimitable manner, and whispered, "I say, them night lights in York must be bad for the eyes — I sa-ay, you mole-eyed fool, don't you see 'em?"

An instant later one of the queer tufts of weed nimbly sprinted for a few yards, then halted like a soldier at "attention." Then mine eyes were opened, and I saw the glorious truth — that every tuft was a golden plover in the grayish brown dress, and that there were near a thousand tufts.

"I'll surround 'em — you do your best — I sa-ay, do your best," and away he crept along the fence line. It was a long way to the next corner, but presently I made him out as he stole down the opposite side. He was down so low, that, were it not for the speed of his movements, I could have sworn he was actually on hands and knees — but this style of creeping was one of his long suits. After a bit he vanished, and I guessed he was "worming it." Then I noticed a small bunch of birds trotting away from his fence, and at once the swiftly planned attack was intelligible. Then a double cloud of smoke belched from a panel much farther along than I fancied Joe could have got, and a string of trotting birds keeled over.

There followed a beautiful sight. Half the surface of the big field appeared to take wing, and a moment later a mighty column of plover

was boring and veering two hundred yards to my left. Would they go, — or turn? For an agonizing minute things looked extremely doubtful. The big flock reminded me of old "pigeon days," as it swept low over the farther end of the field,—then suddenly it rose and, veering sharply, headed directly for my stand. In an instant doubt akin to despair was succeeded by keen excitement. They were coming like the wind. It seemed too good to be true, and it was impossible to resist the inclination to open the gun and make sure that shells were in place, for surely *something* would have to be wrong to spoil such a chance.

Then came the roar of countless wings, and a river of gray speed flowed through the field of blue. To the centre of that stream of life was forty yards, and its height was some twenty yards above the grass. I was almost ashamed to shoot, for it seemed as if shells loaded with strong butter should have done something. The flock looked to be fully one hundred yards long, while at its head and at another point a short distance back, the formation presented an apparently solid mass. Naturally, these two masses caught the eye, and at them the "twelve" hurled its fatal message.

The result was — shameful! For an instant two great gaps showed in the stream of gray — then I understood why some old scientific seer,

having the fear of this day in his heart, had bestowed upon this bird a name from the same tap which friend Jupiter Pluvius still occasionally turns on. The opportunity was, indeed, a golden one, and to be candid, it fairly rained plover.

To slip in another shell and clip a few birds from the rearward stragglers was easy enough, then I watched the retreating flock till it showed dimly gray like the smoke of a distant steamer.

A faint "Hi!" and the downward sweeping of Joe's hat warned me to flatten without bothering about the cripples. Glancing again in the direction taken by the flock, I saw that it had turned. I had not thought of its possible return, but there it was, growing more distinct every moment. Two or three winged birds were moving on the grass, and I instantly realized their value as decoys, and also something else. A rapid crawl of about fifty yards might put me in a much better position, and no time was lost in moving.

As the flock approached, it was too high for effective work, but at precisely the right moment a wounded bird sprang from the ground and fell back. With a humming rush the winged army swooped down to its wounded. The first shot sent the head of the column upward again, then the second barrel raked it for a third of its length.

Plover pattered all over the field, while the survivors swept over Joe. Another double hail ripped through the crowded mass and scattered it into detached bands, which sped wildly in all directions. Twice, groups of fifteen or twenty dashed past my stand and paid full toll, and I could hear Joe hammering away. Then, for a few moments, some bewildered single birds gave chances to both guns, then silence fell and far away a dark cloud paled and vanished.

It was some twenty minutes before the "powcher" would admit that there was no more return to be expected. Then we set to work at the retrieving. This proved no easy task, for a fall plover matches short brown grass in a baffling fashion. Finally, after piling together all birds lying within a certain area, we tramped a few yards apart, to and fro from end to end of the field. This method was rewarded by the discovery of half a dozen or more scattered birds. The total bag numbered eighty-odd.

The birds were in prime condition, and it was an easy task to arrange them in small lots. The disposal of them was still easier, for a man troubled with too much choice game is mighty apt to be, for the moment, the most popular chap in town.

Upon one other occasion a great flock of plover

behaved in a similar manner, but as the conditions were almost identical, the one description will suffice. These two days were by far the best I have enjoyed in many years of shooting. A bag of from eight to fifteen would be nearer the average performance.

FOREIGN GAME

While it is not my purpose to dwell at any great length upon the various game-birds which have been introduced by sporting clubs, associations, and enterprising private individuals, a few remarks may not be out of order in concluding this volume on American upland game-birds.

In the first place, I may as well say that, in my opinion, most of the money lavished upon the importation and breeding of foreign game might be better spent in behalf of native birds. No country in the world has finer native game than this continent can boast, nor is there any foreign game-bird able to truly fill the place of any American species.

In waterfowl, nothing of which I have any knowledge can surpass our swans, geese, and ducks, while in the matter of long-legged game, from cranes to the least of shore-birds we are without a peer. It is true that the European woodcock is a fine bird, twice the size of ours, but no man, competent to pass an opinion on the sporting and edible qualities of the two species, would hesitate over awarding the palm to the smaller candidate.

Among gallinaceous game-birds, Europe's best include the capercailzie, pheasant, black-game, red grouse, and the partridge. To offset these, we have the turkey and the many grouse and partridge described in this book. No sane man would for one moment think of comparing the turkey with the capercailzie, unless he wanted to convince the big grouse that comparisons truly are odious. The pheasant we already have in abundance, while the question of our ever being able to establish a useful stock of black-game and partridge remains an open one. The red grouse, grand fellow that he is, looks like an impossibility, unless we prove able to induce the heather of his beloved moors to thrive upon some of our far western table-lands. That the black-game, red grouse, and partridge are choice and desirable birds goes without saying, but does not imply them superior, or even equal to, the best of our natives. So long as brave brown Bob shall continue to whir from bristling stubble to rustling corn, or the sheltering glory of the turning leaf, so long shall the British partridge have an unconquerable rival. And so long as the breeze-bent grasses hide the eggs of "chicken" and "sharptail," so long must the quality of black-game, and even the red grouse, be disputed.

The possibility of firmly establishing the big capercailzie remains for future solution — possi-

bly the answer may be furnished in the affirmative by New England, the Canadian maritime provinces, Quebec, or some portion of the vast mountainous regions of the Pacific side. I fail to see why serious effort should be devoted to the attempt. There are many better native game-birds, if sport be the object, for the best the acclimated capercailzie would offer would be a mongrel form of still hunting with the small calibre rifle. To stalk a calling bird and drop him from his perch doubtless would be a mildly interesting feat for the first few attempts, but I utterly fail to perceive how it could permanently rival turkey-tracking or even turkey-calling.

The one imported bird now firmly established and entitled to a place among American upland game is the pheasant. While we have many breeders of pheasants, such as the golden, silver, Amherst, and other beautiful species, the bird in which sportsmen are most interested is the Mongolian, or ringneck, *Phasianus torquatus*. This is a large and exceedingly handsome bird, hardy enough to thrive almost anywhere in the forested regions of the United States; but judged from the sporting point of view, it is greatly inferior to the best of our grouse.

Some twenty odd years ago the first of the ringnecks and other Chinese pheasants were imported. The Hon. O. N. Denny, then the

United States Consul-General at Shanghai, was prominent among the sportsmen interested in the Americanizing of the long-tailed Mongolians. The first lot of birds, as nearly as I can remember, numbered about fifty pairs. In this lot were half a dozen species — the ringneck, the green Japanese, the copper, the Tragopan, the silver, and the golden. The birds were controlled by the old Multnomah Rod and Gun Club, and were placed on Protection Island in Puget Sound. A game-keeper had charge of the pheasantry, and later, when the club ceased to exist, he paid himself arrears of wages by leasing the pheasant-shooting to some western men. The birds, however, thrived, and their descendants are plentiful to-day. Later Judge Denny sent a shipment of ringnecks, and these birds were turned over to a number of Oregon farmers, who gave the new arrivals a proper chance. As a result Oregon, west of the Cascade range, has pheasants in abundance, and there are plenty of the birds at other points from Vancouver Island southward. They are as hardy as the native grouse, thrive upon the same food, and furnish very fair sport. The worst feature about them is their love of sprinting. For all-round running ability, the Mongolian pheasant is no mean rival of a trout brook in fine condition. He eats a considerable quantity of grain too; but for this he more than

pays by destroying great numbers of noxious insects.

My somewhat limited acquaintance with this pheasant has not fostered a very high opinion of its value as a purely sporting bird. Beautiful the Mongolians are and excellent eating too, but their footwork is exasperating, and not at all calculated to improve a good dog. When a pheasant rises within easy range, the flush is marked by a characteristic whirr and a cackling cry. The flight is strong and fairly fast. A bird going straight away is an easy mark, but a right or left quarterer at top speed is quite another proposition, especially when forty or fifty yards away. The combination of speed and long tail is very apt to puzzle a novice, who almost invariably misses through shooting behind.

A good performer on pinnated, or sharptail grouse, will speedily acquire the knack of pheasant-shooting. Such a man will not underestimate distance, or fail to swing his gun well ahead, and he will score well on pheasants after a few trials.

The first specimen to fall to my skill was, I grieve to state, an illegal quarry. The then new birds were carefully protected at all times, and I certainly had no idea of violating the law, in fact, I had no gun, but was merely out for a stroll. A strange bird ran across the path and into some brush, and I picked up a stone and started to in-

vestigate. When the bird flushed and the light shone fairly on the plumage, I so greatly admired it that the stone struck exactly in the centre of that beautiful pheasant's back. It was a great chance shot, and for a moment there was jubilation.

Then came a nasty realization that this particular bird and all of its kin were protected by a law which carried a penalty about as long as the wonderful throw. However, there was the dead pheasant, a particularly fine one too, and there I was, looking at it, and, incidentally, looking to see if anybody else was looking.

Presumably a God-fearing, law-abiding citizen would have gone in and informed on himself, and got fined, or jailed, to the value of fifty odd dollars. I didn't. Instead, I sneaked the bird into the brush and carefully removed and folded the skin; then, with the body in a pocket and the skin inside my vest, I strode in righteousness through the land, keeping wide of bird-dogs and conversing with no man till my room was reached. A trifle of arsenic from the druggist's cured the skin, then I fared kitchenward and had the body cooked. It was by no means bad — that is, for a skinned bird.

That there will come a time when our landed gentry will have their pheasant-shooting after the English fashion — keepers, beaters, and all — is

more than probable. John Bull knows better than any other man how to get the best possible sport out of the smallest of areas. He has long made a study of the pheasant, and has thoroughly mastered the problem of its rearing, guarding, and shooting. He has moulded a foreign bird to his purpose until it fits the conditions like a native, and in so doing he has changed what once was a mere addition to a somewhat abbreviated game-list, into one of its most important items. When the time arrives, as it eventually must, when certain portions of this country will bear no distant resemblance to the older land, the pheasant in all probability will attain a prominence and importance like that accorded it in its island stronghold oversea.

Until quite recently there was a marked tendency upon our side to sneer at British shooting, especially pheasant-shooting. Unthinking and ignorant persons appeared to labor under the delusion that British game was something in the line of stall-fed, quarry-tame, hand-reared creatures, purposely kept fat and easy in order that Lord This and Sir That might kill long strings without a miss and with the least possible trouble to their high-bred selves. The utter absurdity of such a notion will be abruptly revealed to the average American sportsman whenever he may decide to try a bit of British sport. Unless he be

an exceptionally good shot, he will experience no difficulty in finding men quite capable of taking his measure either at the traps or in the field. While the best all-around shots I have ever seen certainly have been American professionals and market-hunters, some of the deadliest performers in the field here, or anywhere, are British amateurs who learned their art in the school of the pheasant, red grouse, partridge, cock, and snipe.

It has been my pleasant task to introduce more than a few Britons to the joys of Bob-white shooting, and I frankly admit that some of those same "raw 'uns" tied my stockings a *leetle* tighter than was good for the circulation. Furthermore, the real British sportsman is a glutton for hard work, a walker from Walkerville, and, usually, both a good judge and handler of dogs.

THE CRANES

THE WHOOPING CRANE

(*Grus americana*)

Only those who have shot in the Northwest, West, and Southwest would be apt to rank this and the following species as game-birds. To the majority of eastern sportsmen, the name crane suggests a long-legged, wading, fish and frog eating, haunter of marshes, streams, and ponds, and about the last sort of bird a man would care to eat. All that might be true enough of herons, but it by no means applies to the rather similar appearing, but really very different, cranes.

The present species, the whooping crane, is not only a game-bird in every sense of that term, but he is one of the most difficult of all game-birds to get the better of. Indeed, the Canada goose, wild turkey, whooping crane, and his cousin, the sand-hill crane, are all capable of thoroughly testing the skill and resource of the craftiest of sportsmen.

A big swan, elevated upon very long legs, and equipped with a bill like a bronze dagger, would roughly resemble this stately bird as he towers above the prairie grasses. The head of a full-

grown crane, standing erect, is nearly five feet above his toes; and from that elevation his marvellously keen golden eyes can note every movement of a prowling foe, near or remote. Many a time have I taken a long-range rifle and attempted to wriggle over the grass to something like a reasonably sure range, only to fail. At five hundred yards the crane might appear carelessly indifferent; at about four hundred his lean head would rise and remain pointing like a weather-vane until he decided to vacate the territory, which usually happened when the rifle was yet three hundred yards distant. There are men, I presume, who would pierce a crane's eye at such paltry distances, but our paths have not happened to cross.

I have yet to see a man stalk this bird and kill him fairly. The nearest ever I came to it was on a Northwest prairie. A friend was driving me out to some "chicken" country when we spied a pair of crane rising like lighthouses, white and tall, above the sea of grass. I suggested that we edge in their direction, then whirl dead on and gallop for it down what wind there was. He looked at me in a peculiar way, grinned significantly, and remarked, "You old goose — shooter!" adding the word "shooter" after as long a pause as he deemed polite.

Something in his manner kept me from insist-

ing, but presently I thought of something else. Under the seat lay a big repeating rifle, and I suggested that he should walk the team steadily ahead while I slipped out with the rifle-case and tried my hand at creeping.

"All right; but I bet the dinner you fail," he replied, and out I went.

To get ready without making any conspicuous movements while lying flat in short grass is not the easiest of tasks, but finally I managed it in a style which appeared to be satisfactory. In any event the big birds stood as motionless as a couple of trees, and the creeping began. After wriggling along for some fifty yards the undertaking began to look promising. Then a distant voice sang out: "When they turn up-wind, they're going to fly," and I heeded it, for the speaker was a veteran plainsman and a master of bird craft.

The cranes were standing about five yards apart, but as I wormed along one bird moved two paces nearer its fellow and turned, facing the breeze. This movement brought its back toward me, while the other bird was standing broadside on. I felt that it might turn at any moment, and that the next moment both would take wing, so a shot was decided upon. Lying flat, with a dead elbow-rest, I drew a bead on the centre of the snowy body. The rifle never quivered, and at

the report one bird leaped into the air and made off on great waving fans of snow and ebony.

But the other? Ah! the poor other — he lay like the last snows of winter — a mere drift of white against the bronzy grass.

With a yell of delight the driver whirled his ponies and rattled over to the crane, which he presently brought back in triumph. I still lay in the grass, thinking things. And this was the celebrated crane which no man could stalk — the wary white sentinel of the grassy sea — the unapproachable, spotless warden of the honor of the North? And I, a tenderfoot, had slain it first throw out of the box! It was absolutely bewildering.

"Get up out of that! What's the matter — did she kick?" shouted my driver; but I merely rolled over and looked earnestly and sorrowfully at the beautiful bird.

"You're a wonder! But, say, why didn't you hold on the other — he was broadside to you?" he continued.

To me the glory of the sunshine had paled to a funereal gray, but I had to answer, and the answer was — "Dammit, I *did!*"

His yell of laughter almost sent the ponies up in the air, but there was a second barrel coming. He took one glance at the rifle, then leaped out and lay down to safely enjoy himself. Reader, I'm ashamed to speak about that *rear sight!* I

had forgotten all about it, and aimed with it just as it was. He refused to say *where* it was, but from the roasting I got, I suspect it was somewhere about 140 in the shade!

Another remarkable shot may be briefly referred to. It is the habit of the whooping cranes, when ready to begin the southward flight, to rise in mighty spirals into the upper air and there float about, frequently in considerable numbers. Sometimes the birds rise so high that they are lost to view, and only their trumpeting tells where they are. Again, they will keep lower, so that their wheeling, floating flight is plainly visible; and, occasionally, but not as a rule, they will wheel overhead within long rifle-shot.

One day, with a friend, I was lying in the grass beside a Manitoba lake, the resort of many ducks. It was a warm, still day, with the wonderful northern sunshine at its best. We knew that great rafts of ducks and many geese surely would come to the lake toward nightfall, but for the time there was nothing to do but lounge at ease upon dry grass. We had with us two guns and a repeating rifle, the latter for a possible chance at crane.

That chance came, but in a totally unexpected manner. As we lay, we heard the clatter of the giant birds from the nor'ard, and eventually a large flock came drifting in airy spirals directly over us. There were birds at various heights —

some perhaps not more than three hundred yards above our heads, others so high that they seemed no larger than gulls. All were floating and wheeling, and their circling courses blended and cut into each other in a manner truly bewildering. Fully half of the birds appeared to be shouting at the other half, and, taken altogether, the sight was most interesting.

After we had watched them for some time, my comrade remarked, "What are we two duffers dreaming about?" As he spoke he seized the rifle, pointed it at the flock, fired, and at once handed it over to me. We lay upon our backs side by side, and all I did was to rest the butt of the piece on the ground beside me, glance along the barrel, fire, and pass the rifle back. He took another shot, then something happened. I fired in the same careless fashion, and was in the act of passing back the rifle, when we heard a distinct "whop!" from above.

"By the Lord Harry, you *got* one — and here he comes!" roared my friend.

It was true enough. That storied chance shot had killed the —— or rather the crane, and he was coming like a small avalanche of snowy plumage. He fell in the alkali water a few yards from the mud, and after considerable trouble I managed to get him out without going too deeply into the Crown Lands Department. The ball had struck

him squarely in the heart, and needless to say he was as dead as stale beer.

The cream of the sport with both species of crane is to be enjoyed on the Pacific side and far to the southward, but not infrequently the sand-hill crane furnishes excellent sport at many points in the "corn belt" of the western states.

THE SAND-HILL CRANE
(*Grus canadensis*)

Much smaller than his stately white relative, this crane is possessed of his full share of grace, beauty, and distrust of white man's medicine. The male in perfect plumage is a symphony in gray — in fact, he is a well-dressed gentleman, whose every movement is indicative of self-possession and cold reserve. And those desirous of cultivating his close acquaintance will find their path beset by difficulties. While considerably shorter than the white fellow, his eye is fully as keen and his lean head quite as full of wisdom. In good condition, he is excellent eating, his chief diet, like that of his family, being tender green stuff and ripe grain.

The shooting of this bird, as followed in the West and Southwest, so closely resembles wild-goose shooting, that a description of one might serve for both. The prime requisites are to get into the line of flight and to conceal oneself in the

most natural-looking "hide" and remain motionless and watchful. "Get down and keep still" is the very best advice I can give to crane or goose shooter. Be the "hide" a hogshead or a pit in the ground, or a small screen of grass or weeds, natural or artificial, the only way to get the best results is to keep covered and wait till the sound of wings or the clatter of cries tells that the game is almost directly overhead. It cannot be too near, for the nearer it is allowed to approach the more time will there be for the gun to get into deadly action.

The crane-shooter should remember that such large birds appear to be much nearer than they really are, and also that they have wonderfully sharp eyes. The slightest movement is apt to be at once noticed, whereupon the birds immediately sheer off, and what should have been a golden opportunity is promptly and permanently ruined. The novice, and not unfrequently the veteran, finds it a hard task to keep still, especially when a large flock is bearing down upon the ambush and calling as only cranes can. The ringing *kor-r-r-r-r-root*, pouring from their throats, thrills like the blare of many trumpets. It is a veritable call to arms, yet the wise man listens and grins, and waits with his nose almost driven into the ground, until the clamor falls from directly above and he can distinctly hear the

wiff-wiff of broad feathery fans. When he does move, it is with the smooth, rubbery celerity of a serpent working overtime, and he finds himself almost mixed up with a terrified, flapping host, out of which he ought to get enough to ease the strain for the time being.

Possibly a bird may be winged, and, if so, give it another charge as it goes trotting away. A winged crane can run at a very fair rate, and any attempt at chasing it may mean the scaring off of other approaching flocks; besides, it is only humane and sportsmanlike to speedily end the suffering of a maimed victim. Hence, wisdom and humanity both plead for a prompt settlement of the matter, and their plea is backed by another excellent reason. This one projects from the bird's face for several inches, and each inch feels like a foot when the dagger-like affair happens to encounter an outstretched hand. On account of his armament, I never voluntarily stoop over a wounded crane, for one of his unerring jabs may mean the loss of an eye, or, if the man be lucky, merely a nasty cut in the face. All the wounded cranes I have seen were game to the last, and apparently all ready for a trifle of rapier-play with any antagonist. Upon one occasion, an enthusiastic spaniel, with more zeal than judgment, twisted himself free of his collar and broke away to show what he could do in the way of

retrieving. The subsequent yelping was entirely too long for insertion here, but the spaniel might have won in the double-nose class any time after. Only a second-class tailor with the usual note coming due at the bank can send in his bill with an equally deadly and exasperating accuracy, at least so I've been told.

While I have shot a few sand-hills at various points and found the sport very fair, the taking of the first specimen is the best-remembered experience. The scene of action was in western Ontario and the bird in question presumably was a stray, for he was two dozen miles, or more, from the nearest resort of a few of his kin.

In the centre of a pasture lay a peculiar pond of a couple of acres in extent. All about the pasture rose high wheat and corn lands, while near by ran a fair-sized river. Beyond question, the pond had once been the bed of the river, which had cut a new channel and left the pond to gradually dry up. At the time referred to, the water in the pond was about two feet deep at the deepest part, elsewhere it was little more than a bog choked with lily pads and bordered with rice. At one end stood a clump of willows. Ducks of various kinds, the most numerous being the beautiful wood-duck, were in the habit of dropping into the pond about sundown, and a man concealed among the willows frequently

could enjoy a fairish bit of sport. The willows afforded the only "hide," and by the unwritten law, the first man on the spot had the right to that evening's flight. For this reason, on the day in question, I was in possession about mid-afternoon, and prepared to wait till dusk.

The waiting was lazy work, but my cogitations were interrupted by a big shadow drifting across. To leap to feet and seize the gun was the natural impulse, and I snapped at a great bird which was swinging directly into the blinding glare of an unclouded sun. For a few seconds eyes were useless, then something fell about the centre of the pond. At first glance I mistook it for the common great blue heron, then rose the unmistakable head and neck of a sand-hill. This was an important discovery, and the next question was how to secure the prize. I knew the crane was winged, and its lying where it fell suggested that a leg also had been put out of business, which later proved to be the case.

But how to get him out was the question. There was an unknown depth of mud at the bottom of that pond, and parts of it would heave and quake in a nasty way. To attempt to swim was entirely out of the question, for a man once down in that mess would stand a brilliant chance of stopping there. Finally I decided to reef up trousers to the fork, to remove boots and socks,

lay the socks aside, and replace the boots on bare feet to protect them while wading. When the boots were tightly laced to keep out the mud, all preparations were completed, but I suspect that the *ensemble* was highly suggestive of an overgrown specimen of *Grus*.

Those who have tackled a quaking bog will understand what a portion of this task was like. At first there was only mud, — black, greasy mud, — of any depth you please, but that mattered little. There is a way, getting a lot of grass, rice, or other stuff under your feet, and moving at a steady pace, which enables one to defy mere mud. A bit farther in, however, it was different. The whole business began to sway and heave till it rolled in slimy waves. Then came the full realization of what a stumble or error in putting down a foot might mean, and I heartily cursed the crane for having fallen in such a place.

At last I neared him, and something in the gleam of his steadfast eye suggested caution. The filthy water was within about four inches of the uprolled trousers, and I was slowly sinking. To bend over the bird was too risky. A jab for an eye would have been the certain penalty, and that would almost as certainly have meant a backward lurch and a possible loss of balance and general mix up, too horrible to contemplate. To edge a bit closer and provoke a strike at my hand

seemed the best policy, for the sinking process was steadily going on. So I edged nearer.

That infernal crane must have read Haggard's yarn of Good and his beautiful white legs, for he appeared to recognize the last visible inch of white, on which he promptly scored. The touch of his dagger was the most thrilling thing so far, but the stroke fully extended his long neck, which was promptly gripped. Had I been six inches nearer, his blow might have bored a hole an inch or so deeper; as it was the red ink and the black were mixing freely. My personal comments on cranes unto the third and fourth generation and swamps from the Flood downward, need not be dwelt upon. Only the man holding an unchokable sand-hill crane by the neck, having a freshly bored hole in his leg, and standing upon an acre or so of poultice made out of black bread and just beginning to draw, will ever be able to understand.

But the end was not yet. The return had to be made with due caution, and every now and then the crane would grab something with his sound foot and beat with his wings till the storm-centre looked like a mud volcano. To pick one's steps under such conditions is *not* so easy as writing about it. At last, when fairly firm footing was only a couple of yards away, one bare shin encountered something which felt like "shell-burred cable." The very touch of it produced an

involuntary creepy feeling; but when that cable *moved*, as it presently and distinctly did, the *creepy* feeling flashed into the had been. In its stead surged up a sprinty, a get-to-shore-p-d-q sort of a sensation which carried me to terra firma in three astounding prances. Hence, it *is* possible to traverse quaking bog, if one's speed be sufficient. Still, I had my bird, and upon turning to look at the few spots I had touched during the final spurt, there was a shiny black head, a wicked-looking eye, and a goodly length of animated garden-hose, to remind me that the pond was a favorite haunt of a lusty breed of black snake.

The next thing to do was to quote a few stanzas from "The Hanging of the Crane," inserting the more expressive word for the ladylike "hanging." Then the prize was carefully killed and hung on the weeping-willow tree, while I sought the river for a very necessary house-cleaning. I was a bit anxious about the wound in the leg, for I suspected that the swamp matter might cause trouble later. However, a thorough washing and squeezing, a plugging with tobacco, held fast by a good long bandage from the only place where such long bandages grow on a man, served for temporary treatment, and, although the wound was sore for a time, it caused no serious trouble.

THE MOURNING DOVE

(*Zenaidura macroura*)

Adult male and female — Entire upper parts, olive-brown, varying to a bluish gray; sides and back of neck, iridescent; breast, with a pinkish tinge; belly, buff; tail, long, pointed, the outer edges conspicuously tipped with white; bill, black; legs and feet, lake-red. Length about 12 inches. Range, from southern Maine, southern Canada, and Oregon, south to Panama and the West Indies.

This beautiful and common bird arrives in the latitude of New York in March and remains until November. It is a swift, strong flier, passing with a whistling sound which distinguishes it from all other northern birds. The cry of this bird, from which it derives its name, is doleful indeed. No bereaved creature, wailing o'er its dead, could utter a sadder or more pleading appeal than the long-drawn "*Coo-ah — coo-coo-coo*," which this dainty fraud sends floating through the soft April air. I have listened to the dove of an evening, for the cry is more potent when the shadows begin to creep, until the small wretch has fostered a fit of the dismals which demanded a brisk walk as the best remedy.

But mourn he ever so hopelessly, he means not a word of it. On the contrary, he is telling the

object of his affections his own cute version of that same old lie which has made all sorts of doves perform all sorts of foolish capers ever since the original lover hammered his sentiments on a chunk of rock and left it where his barefooted lady could strike it and get stone-bruise or heart-bruise as the case happened to pan out.

The nest of the dove is one of the crudest examples of bird architecture that can well be imagined. It consists of a few twigs, carelessly arranged, and so loose in structure that the two white eggs are easily visible through the bottom of the affair. In the plains country, the nest is placed upon the ground, but in the forested regions, some low, flat branch bears the burden. A fir tree in some park or garden is a favorite site, presumably because one of its flat branches requires fewer sticks to serve the purpose of keeping the eggs together, and where the birds can warm them for the necessary time. Yet, with all their carelessness about the building of the house, the doves are devoted parents, the female frequently feigning lameness to the risk of capture while endeavoring to draw a too prying investigator away from her helpless squabs. The young are fed, like young domestic pigeons, on softened food regurgitated from the parent's crop. Like the domestic pigeon, too, the dove is a great drinker, thrusting the bill into the water and

gulping it down as though in a desperate hurry.

The flesh of the mourning, or Carolina, dove when in good condition is exceedingly palatable, which causes the bird to be eagerly pursued in certain parts of the country, notably the South. There, dove-shooting is a popular sport, and a green hand at it will find the swift fliers anything but easy marks. I have done but little of it, and that mostly in the North, the chief reason for the neglect of the dove being the abundance of other, and in my opinion better, game. Late in the season the fully matured birds scatter far and wide during the day, and toward dusk come whistling back to the common roost. At that time, a man in the line of flight can have some very pretty shooting, single chances being the rule as the doves straggle past. At many points in the South, this flight is heavy and the guns keep up an irregular popping. In the North, one could hardly expect more than from a half-dozen to a dozen chances of an evening.

A great many excellent people are given to railing against dove-shooting, but their objections have no solid foundation. The fact is that, from the story of the Flood down to that more notable reference to the Dove, we have naturally held the name dear. Had the present dove chanced to have been named " chicken-hawk," or " crow," not

a dear old lady in the land would have cared one continental how many of the breed we sportsmen butchered. Then, too, the plaintive sobbing of the love-note appeals to tender hearts, as does the billing and cooing of all doves appeal to the romantic side of those who are doing likewise, or who are thinking of future possibilities in that line. Hence the sportsman who shoots doves must needs be a hard-hearted brute — that is, unless he happens to enter the lists as a wooer. Then, I've heard, for of course I have no personal knowledge, that even a manly, straightforward sportsman can be forgiven — nay, even encouraged, possibly through a Christian desire to wean him from the cruelty of his ways. And wise men, in pity of ignorance perhaps, have even whispered to me that a mess of doves is not necessarily a direct insult, and that one nicely mounted — say in a position which would enable it to brood on the side of a hat — is no bad scheme.

One of the deadliest foes of the dove and of many of our common birds is the red squirrel. Any unusual commotion among our feathered friends of garden and orchard is apt to be caused by puss or the red rascal. The squirrel's prey is the eggs, which he prefers when the young are almost ready to leave the shell. He will hold an egg in his paws like a nut, and swiftly nibble away the shell until he can draw forth the

bleeding dainty, which he devours with keen relish. Those who notice small pieces of blood-stained eggshell scattered under the trees will seldom err in blaming the squirrel for the murderous work. I have many times seen red squirrels raiding nests in pine, fir, and fruit trees, and I suspect that nests upon the ground are robbed more often than most people imagine. I have shot squirrels red-handed and red-lipped from a feast, also while carrying an egg, while more times than I can now recall I have driven the robber from a nest before he had accomplished his purpose. A raid upon a dove's nest will serve as an illustration.

Before my old home grew many stately pines and firs. As these trees aged, they became rather ragged in appearance, so, to induce a denser growth, and also to supply the green for church decoration and Christmas tree, the top of a great tree was sawed off each year and the exposed end capped with a bit of board. The doves soon found these boards, and were not slow in discovering that they were ideal nesting-places. I used to take the young doves and tame them, for they are most interesting pets.

One day the persistent scolding of a red squirrel attracted my attention, and picking up the best remedy for such rascals, I stole out to one of the "dove-trees" as we called them. On the nest was the mother bird, and sticking to the bark,

a few inches below the nest, was the red thug. The two were playing a small but thrilling selection from the great drama of life and death. The heroic dove was firmly braced above her almost hatched treasures, and with one wing raised as a fencer raises his swordless hand, she faced her foe with the courage of despair. Her fighting wing was nervously patting her side, ready for instant action, while her dainty head kept nodding an undying defiance. As I held the best trump out, I let them play a bit.

From his position, all the squirrel could see was the dove's head and her wild eye, and, skirmish as he would, that eye never lost him. If he shifted around the trunk, the dove turned with him — in fact, he could go around the tree, but not around the dove. His object, of course, was to rush the position, and I soon discovered that there was but one place which offered him an easy course, and that he knew it. All the time he kept up a curious purring noise and a rasping with his teeth as though he were gnawing some hard substance — this, in all probability, intended to intimidate the dove.

"Stay with him, old lady — there's reënforcements," I chuckled to myself, but I wanted to see more.

Presently the squirrel worked back to the real point of attack, and with a scream he thrust his

head above the nest. With a bat like the thump of a boxing-glove, the wing met his nose, and only the strong hooks on his hind feet prevented his being knocked clean out of the arena. As it was, he hung for an instant head downward and he slid a couple of feet before he could recover himself.

Talk about language! The sputtering tirade would have made a common scold envious. He was mad now, clear through, and presently he again stole upward to repeat his attack and to again encounter the clever wing. Another and yet another attempt was baffled in the same way, and if his piratical nose didn't tingle, his remarks were a poor indication of his feelings. Then he acquired wisdom. A foot above the nest was a small branch from which he could drop fairly upon the dove's back, and this he presently seemed to figure out. His change of attack at once filled the dove with fear, as her demeanor plainly showed. But the thing had gone far enough.

"None of that — that's foul!" I remarked.

Instantly the late bravo flattened with fear, then he made a flying leap to a main limb, and from that to another tree. Not caring to shoot so near the nest, I chased after him, and certainly he showed me what a terrified red squirrel can do. From that tree he hurled himself to a

roof, and as no wise man shoots shot into his own shingles, I let him run. Thence to the roof of a big greenhouse (another poor place for a shot), while I kept within easy range. Finally to the top scantling of a picket fence, along which he coursed like a puff of red smoke. I forget how many pickets I held ahead of him. It matters not, for the result went to show that I had led him plenty, and leaded him more than plenty.

THE QUAIL AND THE GROUSE OF THE PACIFIC COAST

By T. S. Van Dyke

THE QUAIL AND THE GROUSE OF THE PACIFIC COAST

THE VALLEY-QUAIL OF CALIFORNIA

On the Pacific Coast are three varieties of the blue or crested quail, of which the most numerous is the valley-quail, so called from its gathering in the fall in great bands of hundreds, and even thousands, which, before they were much hunted, spent most of the time in the valleys instead of in the hills where they were hatched. But it lives everywhere from coast to mountain top, except in the higher ranges, where it disappears toward five thousand feet above the sea. From 1875 to 1885 I lived where these birds were in sight or sound, morning, noon, and night, the whole year round, and never saw any evidence of their raising a second brood in a season. An occasional late brood is doubtless due to the destruction of the first nest. It roosts in terrific cactus, into which it flies at full speed, or in trees out of which it goes at dawn like a charge of grape-shot, and as it loses no eggs by wet weather and suffers none from winter freezing, its natural enemies cannot

keep it down. Up to the rapid settlement of the country and the advent of the cheap breech-loader, its numbers were beyond all comprehension, especially in southern California. But under the rigid protection it now has by a limit of twenty-five a day to the gun and the stoppage of market-shooting, it will soon be plenty again.

Its length is about eleven inches for the largest specimens, with wing of four and a quarter, or nearly the same length as Bob-white, with wing about half an inch shorter. But as the tail is about an inch longer than that of Bob-white, it is really a smaller bird and not so plump. Its color is ashy blue or slate, with chestnut gloss running into warm golden tints underneath, mottled with tawny white, black and cinnamon on the belly, with black throat on the male, a white line over the eye, and white collar around the black throat. Both sexes have a plume of black, imbricated feathers about an inch and a quarter long, curving forward over the bill. In shape it is very graceful, and in action far quicker than Bob-white, except on the wing, where the difference in speed amounts to little; although the common opinion is to the contrary, because under the different conditions it is a harder bird to shoot.

Up to a certain point the valley-quail has not the slightest fear of man, but rather enjoys showing that he is not afraid. No other game-bird

lives so continuously in sight of man, advises him so industriously of his presence, and makes himself so much at home in his garden. Morning, noon, and night his call rings from the hillside by the house; he stands on the granite boulder and surveys you with an air of defiant impudence, trots along the road in front of your horse, and helps himself to your finest grapes. With encouragement he will become tame enough to associate with your chickens and dust himself in your flower beds. In a cage he makes himself quickly at home, and with plenty of room would probably breed in captivity.

No other bird, except his lively cousin of the desert, Gambel's partridge, equals this bird in vivacity. Unless disturbed he moves little on the wing, but his feet are rarely at rest, and when they are his tongue keeps up a low twittering. One can hardly see as much of him as I did for years without believing that to some extent he talks. Some of his many notes are going nearly all the time, even in the smallest bevy. The most common of these is the assembling call, which he keeps going when there is no need of it, so far as you can see. This is of three flutelike notes, with the accent generally strong on the second and sounding much like *O-hi-o.* But the accent is often shifted to the first and last notes, so that it sounds like *Tuck-a-hoe.* Again, the first is suppressed, the middle

one more strongly drawn, and the last dropped so that the call becomes a ringing *k-woick.* The alarm is a sharp *whit-whit-whit* of metallic ring, mingled with a muffled *wook-wook-wook k-wook-ook;* and when the birds are so scattered that they rise singly, many give a sharp *chirp-chirp-chirp* when they rise near you, while nearly all that rise wild are silent. The brooding call is a soft *wah* or *waw* from the male on some bush or cactus near where the female is sitting. During this time he often utters a sharp *tee-oo*, but this is most always when he is on the ground and generally out of sight in cover; while the other is almost never heard except when he is in sight on some perch.

By that class of sportsmen to whom size, flavor, heads, etc., count for nothing, but who love game for its slippery qualities, the valley-quail where well known stands at the head of American game-birds, being surpassed in smartness only by Gambel's partridge. For no other bird equally approachable and of equal numbers can so puzzle even the expert as these two. Like its cunning cousin, the valley-quail trusts first to its legs to escape, and often when you see one run along the ground and then break into flight, it seems a needless absurdity, for the increase in the speed is so slight. No one need have any scruples about shooting at a single bird running, especially when dodging among small bushes.

One of the great bands often allows you to come within sixty or seventy yards on the edge of the plain, and then often moves like an army. First the pickets are driven in, running into, or flying over, the main body, to alight in front. Then part of the main body moves safely out of reach with every swift leg moving in concert. If the danger is imminent the whole moves; sometimes as a whole, shifting to the left or right, or going straight ahead, or reversing with a quick wheeling motion; or sometimes in platoons which run in all manner of flank and oblique movements, but with heads well up and all in line and orderly array that would charm a drill sergeant. Unless pressed too closely, they rarely take wing, though a few of the birds may flutter upon stones for a better inspection of the intruder, and some of the rear guard may fly over the head of the main column. But when you come too near there is a roar of wings that often rivals the distant thunder, and the whole flock is in air in a myriad lines of curling, twisting, darting, and chirping blue.

At about one hundred and fifty yards, and often less, the flock alights with every leg in rapid motion the instant it touches earth. If you are not expeditious, there will be nothing within a hundred yards of that spot by the time you arrive, and if you are a trifle too slow the whole hunt begins again anew. In this way a flock may lead

the tyro up hill and down dale for miles without giving him a shot that will bag anything. But when chased up rapidly and flushed two or three times as soon as they can alight, with a few shots fired over their heads to scare them, the solid ranks suddenly break and scatter over several acres of ground. In this many lie as closely as Bob-white ever lies, depending on the amount and quality of the ground cover, while many more rise at five, ten, fifteen, or twenty yards and upward, from so many unsuspected places and in such varied twists, that most of them call for the very highest skill with the gun. Many more rise far out of shot, while others steal away on silent foot, and still others lie so that you can almost tread on them. For the latter a good dog is needed, but the others are liable to spoil him unless great care be taken to keep him in order in their riotous presence. In this way bags of two hundred and fifty to a gun, with many more crippled and lost by their speed of foot, were not uncommon without a dog fifteen years ago, with almost a certainty of a hundred and fifty. But this was only for the expert, and nothing was more amazing to the tyro than the few feathers he would at first get out of the largest flock. And many an expert from the East, who had not learned the ways of this quail, was equally amazed when he found the weight of his game far less

than that of the ammunition he had shot away. For the first day or two he was quite likely to return from the field with pockets equally empty of both ammunition and game.

But persecution has made this quail far more puzzling even to the best expert. Few are the birds to-day that do not run or fly before you are within one hundred yards. We used to think persecution would make them lie better. But it has been the reverse, though their tendency to lie is still the only hope of the sportsman. To-day they travel on the wing for hundreds of yards, even crossing deep and broad canons, whereas fifteen years ago they rarely took to wing unless going to or from roost. Once it was almost a certainty that the largest flock would alight within two hundred yards; and if it flew over a ridge, the chances were many to one that it touched ground soon after passing the crest. Now the flight is twice or thrice and often several times as long. And if they go over a ridge the great puzzle is to know before it is too late on what part of the slope over the next ravine they alighted, or whether they went clear over the second crest; or whether they went up or down the ravine, which they never used to do. And if you do not quickly settle these points, the whole flock will again be together and under such full leg power that the hunt begins all over again.

Formerly they were easily found by their assembling call, which they kept always going at such a rate that it would generally enable you to locate any flock within a quarter of a mile or more. But now they have learned the use of silence. And they know how to keep still before you come as well as after. And instead of large, noisy flocks in the valleys, they are now in smaller bands high up the hillsides and more out of sight in the brush. Every rise of the flock is now apt to be out of shot, and it is only at the single ones that one can point the gun with any hope, while the rise of these is more than double what it was. Instead of a great roaring blue cloud, you see more often only a string of dark dots stretching over some towering ridge, from which the sound of wings is barely audible in the distance.

When a flock first touched ground from a flight, you were once quite certain to get a shot if you were there soon enough. Now it is generally impossible to reach that spot in time or the next or even the next place. On the place where a big flock first alighted after scattering, one could once find many birds still lying closely an hour or more after chasing the rest in different directions. But to-day it is quite a waste of time to tramp over old spots, though in a few places they still lie well in good cover. The average rise both of the flock and of single birds has also greatly increased.

Only last August 20th, 1901, while hunting deer on the Santa Monica Mountains, some thirty miles from Los Angeles, California, I saw thousands of quail, many of which were not yet full grown. None trotted along the trail ahead of me as in the olden time, but all rose wild, and made long flights, whether I was on foot or horseback. Instead of two hundred or over, the best experts are now content with thirty or forty, while fifty is a big bag even where birds are the most plenty. And nearly all are ready now to concede, what I claimed twenty years ago, that twenty-five quail in a day afford all the sport, exercise of skill, and recreation that any reasonable person should desire.

Once good shooting could be had without a dog because the flocks were so noisy one could locate them by the ear more quickly than the dog could by scent. But now a dog is almost a necessity on most grounds, to find the birds in the first place, as well as to keep track of them after rising. And he must be a marvel of speed and endurance, a salamander in heat and dry air, a paragon of patience and obedience, or the wily game will give him the slip and leave him too hot and breathless to be of use for some time. And he must be an equal marvel of good sense, and his master still more so, or the excitement will be too much for him. California is breeding dogs equal to the

emergency; but it is no easy matter to cultivate the high speed and endurance necessary, and at the same time restrain the carelessness such a pace is sure to cause. When you consider that the finest eastern dog is nowhere in this race, or if he is, is liable to be worthless in a short time, you can understand the task breeders and trainers have had. But the dog rises to the emergency, and as the quails annually learn more about the range of a gun and the speed of man, so the dog learns to go faster without flushing them and how to crowd them without passing the danger line, until the contest of brute against brute is now the finest exhibition on earth, and enough to reward one for a long tramp with the gun left at home.

THE MOUNTAIN-QUAIL

When we climb the larger hills of the Pacific Coast to where the perennial brooks sing down dark defiles, and the columbine and the tiger-lily begin to flame from deeper shades, we hear a *ch-ch-ch-ch-ch-chee-ah* from the dense green of the lilac or the bristling red of the manzanita, so plaintive yet so sweet that we are at once brought to a halt. Or along the hills around your camp you may be awakened from your morning nap by a *cloi-cloi-cloi-cloi-cloi* as silvery as ever fell from feathered throat. And it may swell again at eveningtide where the mimulus pours its fountain

CALIFORNIA MOUNTAIN-QUAIL

of gold over the old dark rocks, or from the beds of fern around the little meadow where the iris blows.

When you hear the first call, which sometimes sounds more like *quit-quit-quit-quit-queee-ah*, you may see a new quail steal softly out of sight. Or he may turn to look at you with swelling breast of slate-blue tinged with the olive and brown that robe most of the back. A chestnut throat bordered with black on the sides, and that again with white, dark cinnamon underneath, with sides in broad bands of black and reddish white, with two curving stripes of white along the sides of the back, and two long, slender plumes of jet nodding backward over the trim little head, the whole covering a body apparently much larger and plumper than that of Bob-white, catch your eye at once. Another hops upon a stone beside him to take a better look at you, and then beside a fallen log you mark another little back of rich olive-brown, while all around little feet go rustling gently out of sight. They may seem very tame, yet through all their simplicity runs an undertone of caution; and before you know it a dozen or more birds have completed a close inspection of you and vanished as softly as the shadows of the oaks in the falling of night. They act as if they would like to trust you if the cowardly little legs were not so weak. Yet they allow the legs to furnish the logic of the

occasion, and the artless trust they have for a moment reposed in you suddenly seems the sublimity of art.

Thus acted once the mountain-quail, and so he still acts in those sections where he has not yet learned the duplicity of man. But in most cases he has learned in the school of experience a very different style of art. And there are few scholars more apt in learning about modern guns and powders; the scratching of tenderfoot leggings against the stiff arms of the wild cherry will now start up a silent leg-energy that will leave one wondering if such a thing as the mountain-quail ever really existed.

This quail can live at or near sea level apparently as well as the valley-quail. But it loves the wooded glens and singing brooks of the higher ranges, and is at home from where the timber begins to cast enough shade at about three thousand feet, to far away up the slopes where the gray squirrel whisks his bushy tail no more; where the lavender of the band-tailed pigeon is seen only as it drifts over the deep blue of the cañon far below, and where the coyote, the fox, and the wildcat bring no more anxiety. Though sometimes seen where the arcades of alder that arch over the hissing brook run out into lowland willows, it is, in the southern part of California, a bird of the high mountains. On the great San Pedro Martir of

Lower California (Mexico) it is found where stupendous boulders, piled into cathedral towers, almost hide the giant sugar-pines that struggle through the rifts between them. But I never saw it below the mountain's top, or in the first few hundred feet of the mighty gulches that plunge abruptly down. As, however, we approach the northern line of California, where the rainfall is greater, and the timber runs much nearer sea level, it becomes more of a lowland bird, until, in Oregon, it may almost be called the common quail of the country; for it runs out into the edges of the valleys, and in the thickets adjoining meets the valley-quail, which there is fast becoming more scarce.

Like the valley-quail, the mountain-quail is easily tamed, and might be utilized in those parts of the East where the winter snows are too much for Bob-white.

With plenty of room it might be induced to breed in captivity. Where I lived in 1878 there were two that ran with the chickens, and went into the same coop with them every night. They were so tame that I could almost pick them up, and with the same effort they could probably have been made as tame as any chicken. For many months after being brought from their wilder home they stayed about the place with no restraint, but as both were males, the question of

breeding could not be determined. Finally, one disappeared, and after looking lonely and sad for a few weeks the other disappeared. As chickens were vanishing in the meantime, *via* the fox, coyote, and wildcat, there is no reason to believe that the quails left because weary of captivity.

It is commonly said that this quail is of fine flavor. It is dry and insipid compared to Bob-white. This still leaves considerable margin for excellence, and in the hands of a cook who knows something besides those cabalistic words "quail on toast" a very good dish may be made of it. But slowly desiccated on one side of the fire and then laid out on a bit of toast slowly desiccated on the other side, in California style, it is the most ridiculous combination I know of. It is the same with the other quails, and even in northern Mexico I have found the blue quail the same way. One can live on them a long time without cloying, and the question of a quail a day for thirty days has no application to these birds.

The mountain-quail cannot be classed among the birds that are regularly hunted like the valley-quail. Its pursuit is more accidental, as it is rarely plenty enough to justify a special trip. Though it breeds in the same numbers as the valley-quail, and apparently has fewer enemies, it is scarce compared with it, while it is so wild and slippery in most places that it should be very plenty to give

much of a bag. The only places where I have seen it plenty enough are in the wild and almost inaccessible parts of the Coast Range of Oregon that appear on the map as unsurveyed. Why it should be so I cannot imagine; for the conditions are the same in many other places as to food, etc., while it is nowhere in that country kept down by the gun. But I have there seen dozens of bevies in a morning's hunt for elk, with every indication that in the salal and ferns they would lie well to a dog. I believe a bag of fifty a day could easily be made there, in places, though I did not try to shoot any. In most places a bag of a dozen would be good, and ordinarily they would bother a dog far worse than the valley-quail or his desert relative. It does not unite in large packs like the other two quails, so that you lack the numbers, which, in case of the others, make up for the running away of so many. You must generally hunt a single bevy, or, at most, two or three together. The greater part of its range lacks the ground cover that allows the other quails to hide well, and everywhere he wears legs that forget none of their cunning. Though not quite so swift of foot as the Arizona quail, the mountain-quail knows even better where to run to and generally inhabits ground where he can utilize to the best this information. There is no finer judge of uphill, and if you are laden with "walking shoes"

and other fashionable toggery, he seems perfectly aware of it, and will give you the fullest opportunity to get your money's worth of bliss out of them, especially if the day is hot. He seems to know, too, that you boast a gun that will clear the brush and bag the game at the same discharge, and he appears to be curious how it will work. No other bird tempts Providence so much, and no other is better able to do it. He lingers just enough to lead you on, and runs just enough to induce the tenderfoot to tear up with a charge of shot the exact spot he has just vacated. He flies just far enough in the open to make the ordinary shot believe he can get him, and then dodges around some dense brush just quickly enough to show him that he cannot. And he deceives the best brush shot with the idea that he is going to lie close enough for a good snapshot in the thickest part of the brush, when he is scudding out of sight up-hill as fast as his legs can carry him. He flies no faster than Bob-white, and twists no more, yet he is a far harder bird to bag on account of his rising farther off, and from unexpected places. From this and the extra toughness of all these quail arises the belief that they are faster fliers and harder to hit than Bob-white, which is not true. If Bob rose the same and without being pointed by a dog, he would be just as hard, except that the duller color of these

birds, in some kinds of cover, makes a little difference. So with the size. "It is much larger than Bob-white," says Dr. Coues. But its tail is nearly an inch longer, and the wings nearly as much longer, while it is fuller feathered about the body. When picked the difference is more apparent than real.

There is but one way to get good shooting out of this bird, and that is to scare and scatter it as quickly as possible, the same as with the valley-quail. Many will often lie well enough, then, to give you some chance, which must be quickly taken. But others will run in spite of all you can do, and are hard enough to hit on the ground when dodging about. By the time you have hazed them enough to make them lie well, you are almost in the same condition, unless dressed in a manner that allows high speed. The way they can run up-hill, hopping and fluttering from rock to rock, and making you believe they are not moving rapidly, while you are scrambling breathless up from below, and all the time just out of shot, is very puzzling. And about the time you think you have driven them to the top of some ridge, with nothing but down-hill on the other side, the way they fool you by being not there when you arrive is one of the most interesting features of life behind the gun.

GAMBEL'S PARTRIDGE

THE QUAIL OF THE DESERT

The Sierra Nevada cuts off the rainfall so that, in a few miles after passing its crest, the eastern slope becomes perfect desert, in many places the most dangerous in the world. Though the valley-quail in some portions of the western slope has shown his ability to thrive without water, and apparently without feed, he does not pass this mountain crest to any extent, though there are many places where he could prosper as well as on the other slope. On the eastern slope his place is taken by the brightest and most active of all the game-birds of earth, Gambel's partridge, a rover and lover of the desert. There are places enough like the rich bottoms of the Colorado River and the farms of Salt River Valley to prove that this bird knows all about the fatness of earth, and does not degenerate in the fulness of its bounties. Yet without a sigh he leaves the rich alfalfa fields, vineyards, and orchards of the irrigated sections to scramble among the fiery rocks that bound the blazing plain, and seems as happy under the mocking shade of a bush that only intensifies the heat by stopping the breeze as he is under the dark chapuli of Sonora, that stands as solidly green as the finest live-oak. So much is he in love with dry air,

dry ground, and eternal sun that he does not pass the crest of the Sierra to the west, although he could certainly thrive there with the valley-quail. The farthest western point at which I have found him was on the Mojave Desert near Dagget, on the meridian of San Bernardino, only twelve miles east of the longitude of San Diego. On this eastern slope of the Sierra he is found throughout a long range, though his greatest numbers are in Arizona and Sonora.

The same in general color, size, form, and habits as the valley-quail of California, he resembles him also in manner of breeding and running into large packs of hundreds and even thousands in the fall. He varies the notes in so many ways that they can hardly be classified, and yet they are so nearly the same that one at once recognizes them. But in the distribution of the colors and especially in the action of the bird, you at once recognize a distinctly different being. The chestnut cap beneath his nodding plume of jet, the island of jet upon his breast, with the broad bands of cinnamon on the sides striped with white, — all these, in contrast with his ashy blue coat, give him an air of something you cannot describe, yet plainly an improvement on the style of his wily cousin of the western coast. In activity and ability to take care of himself under the most adverse conditions, this desert bird is

plainly the superior of the other. You need never inquire where he gets water, or even food, for he can certainly go without water, and often, so far as you can see, dispenses as readily with food. Yet he is always happy and fat, and ready to leave in the lurch the best dogs, the best legs, and the best guns his native land can turn out. For this reason many, at first, pronounce him a fraud. But many more have an irresistible inclination to try him again, an appetite that grows by what it feeds upon, until every one who loves game that can get away in neat style is ready to pronounce him the leader in smartness of all our game-birds.

There is something intensely human about the way Gambel's partridge can toy with your brightest hopes and keep your wits on a tension as severe as the most slippery of your beloved race. And when you consider the small number that with great effort you can bag out of the largest flock, you will be again reminded of another two-legged animal you may have hunted. It looks, too, so humanly innocent before you are well embarked in the chase. Seen from a wagon, it often looks so mild and gentle that one unversed in the tricks of game may say: —

"I don't see how you can shoot so innocent a thing."

And it does often seem mere murder; for the flock may be massed and looking at you at that

distance that is so deadly to a bit of pattern paper. But it is much more likely seventy yards or more, where no one but a tenderfoot would think of shooting into the flock. Perhaps this is on the deep bottom lands of the Colorado River, where the mesquite, that on the open plain forms such a light shade with its feathery foliage, is massed into solid green that forms long winding arcades, or stands alone in clumps of giant size in a tangle of a thousand twisting arms as snaky as the head of Medusa.

Probably the flock does not deign to rise at your approach, but vanishes down one of the shaded aisles of the timber on the most deceptive legs that ever carried a bird, and out of the wagon leaps the tenderfoot to sneak upon it. He keeps out of sight behind a mesquite, and with determination glistening in his eye moves on as rapid a walk as he can. By all means let his determination glisten. You will get no shooting until the birds are scattered, and a dozen tenderfeet in full run would only improve matters.

By the time the tenderfoot emerges from the cover where he last saw the birds he hears them calling over a hundred yards away. He hastens there only to find the call sounding still as far ahead, if not a little more so. Nothing on the ground, nothing in the trees, no sound of buzzing wings or rustling feet, and even the tender

hearted chap who thought it so wicked to shoot them begins now to wonder if the tenderfoot can hit one. Having had some experience with the California quail, you take the field, but quickly wish you had left home that fancy coat, those store leggings, those hobnailed shoes, and other regulation nuisances; while Tenderheart begins to wonder how one of those birds would taste if well broiled. If you would dress as I do for this chase, with only a shirt, pants, and hat, with buckskin moccasins and only two dozen cartridges, with no whiskey flask or canteen, you would soon have them scattered and be in good shape to shoot. But by the time you have them scattered the fashionable sudorifics with which you are laden have had their effect in this hot climate, and you are about ready to pronounce this quail-shooting the meanest of all sublunary humbugs.

"Scattered," did I say? It seems rather as if they were gone forever. For only one or two calls can you hear, and they are far away. It looks as if the flock had only acquired speed from the pursuit. And it is often quite puzzling to tell when the birds have run away from you, and when they have scattered and are lying hidden all around you. But as you move ahead a few rods there is a sudden burst of wings over your head in a big mesquite, and you wheel about and get the gun to your shoulder just in time to

see exactly nothing, but hear another burst of wings from what is now behind you. You wheel once more just in time to see nothing, but from the next mesquite ahead there comes a roar from a dozen pair of wings, making a dim, blue haze through the green that is gone before you can turn the gun upon it. Then as suddenly all is still in all the vast tangles of branches and feathery green around you. You thrash with the gun the branches of a huge mesquite that droop along the ground, but nothing moves. You go to the other side and repeat the thrashing, when out of the side you just left whizz a dozen wings. You make a quick shot at the first bluish haze you see through the green, but on the other side you look in vain for a feather, and conclude that if any shot got through that mass of limb and twigs it was too much exhausted to do any business that day.

You then decide to utilize the tenderfoot to hammer on one side of a tree while you stand ready on the other. A very good scheme, but as you take your position your presence sends a half-dozen birds buzzing out of the top of a mesquite, and so close to the head of the tenderfoot that you dare not shoot. Meanwhile another bird whips out of the bottom of the clump of mesquite, scuds around out of your sight, and then rises into flight in a line with its heaviest mass.

But it makes a slight miscalculation about the relative merits of the two men, and in trying to dodge the tenderfoot it curves outward to where the shot from your gun makes a tangent with its course, and it goes whirling down out of a cloud of feathers of white, chestnut, and slate-blue. Tenderheart comes running from the wagon to look at it, feels of its breast, and inquires about the best mode of cooking it, and then looks around to see what are the prospects of getting some more.

But you suddenly find the trees empty, the call of the birds more rare and farther off. They are only hiding more closely, but you do not know that and think they are gone. I do not mean to say that it would help you much if you did know it, for it takes some time to realize the tramping and retramping that must be done and the quickness with the gun necessary to make a respectable bag out of even the largest flock. But if you did understand them and were properly dressed, you could make a bag such as cannot be made to-day on any game-bird east of the Rocky Mountains, and use up more ammunition in doing it than on any other bird that flies. But being a novice with these birds, you decide that they are gone, that this is not the best kind of ground anyhow, and that something more open is desirable. In which Tenderheart cheerfully concurs, for though he might not admit it, he would like to see man

triumph — at least enough to insure to-morrow's breakfast.

A little nearer the river is a patch of arrowweed in which the game will surely lie well. This is about as dense as Indian corn sown for fodder, seven or eight feet high, a mass of brown stems and green leaves with the top almost a level floor of green. It is little trouble to scatter a flock in this. And it is so easy to walk around the edges, it will surely be easy to force the birds into flight; for the patch is not very wide and you can walk into it if necessary to start the game. Exactly. The birds do rise from it at just about the time and places you expect. But they have a marvellous intuition about the relative heights of arrowweed and the human figure, and lose no time in the application of their wisdom. *Bbbbbbbb*, goes a bird from near the edge, and through the dim haze made by the leaves at the top of the cover you catch sight of a curve of blue just as it starts away on a straight line over the top of the arrowweed. And this straight line happens to be level with the top of the cover, and only five inches above it. Which means that in about five feet from where you first discover it, it is out of sight. And if in desperation you should make a snap shot at its course, the chances are many that you would not touch it, and many more that you would never find it if you did.

So you think you will go to the thin mesquite that borders the arid plain where the cactus and dragon's blood with the bright green of the pala verde make the birds tarry just long enough for you to come within shot, but not enough to hide them so that you cannot see them. Blue and chestnut soon flash among the burning rocks, and the more you quicken your pace the more they flash. You wish you had a lighter gun and less ammunition in your pockets, and soon call for the canteen of water in the wagon. By the time you have emptied it the birds are as far away as ever, and the whole hunt has to be begun anew. But you overtake them again, and one that lingers too long to look at you goes whirling over at forty yards with a quick shot. From a shower of feathers you conclude he is dead, but also learn he was tough enough to flutter out of your reach in a pile of spiny cactus. And by the time you are sure of this the rest are out of reach again, skipping gayly over rocks, with nodding plumes, and making great speed for the top of the ridge. The greater the size of the flock the faster they seem to go, and you may suddenly be paralyzed with the thought that out of thousands of birds you may not get enough to scent the frying-pan enough for Tenderheart, who is now showing lively interest in the matter. By the time you scramble out of breath to the top of the ridge,

nothing is in sight, and about the time you are through wondering where they went you see dark lines twisting here and there through the cactus and brush of the next slope, while away on the sides some blue lines rise buzzing out of shot. A grand surprise for one who went so hopefully to the fray. Yet if you will keep on until you learn to manage them, you can get enough to satisfy any one and have the quickest and finest work with the gun you ever imagined, while Tenderheart will want a gun even more than you do.

THE RUFFED GROUSE

The red ruffed grouse, as he is called, is the same in general size and shape as the brown ruffed grouse of the eastern woods, but is distinctly darker with a reddish cast in the brown. Its habits of breeding and living are about the same, yet with an abundance of food, milder winters than the eastern bird has to endure, and apparently far fewer enemies, it is not as plenty on the very best grounds as the eastern grouse is in many places. And this is the case where it is not shot, trapped, or hunted in any way, and where hawks, owls, coyotes, foxes, wildcats, and other marauders are very rare.

The ruffed grouse is not found in southern or central California, though all the conditions of his happiest existence seem to abound there in

the mountains. He begins to appear far in the North, becomes more plenty in Oregon, and continues on from there up the coast into Alaska, it is said. I have found him most plenty in the Cascade Range, and much more so than in the Coast Range; though in the latter there is far more feed in many places with absolutely no disturbance from man. And even in the Cascades he is most abundant on the eastern slope, where the chain breaks away in short, steep ridges with deep, rocky gulches between, well filled with a tangle of vines and shrubbery. On the western slope, where the range falls away so gently that the last thirty miles of the road to Crater Lake seem almost a level, where huckleberries and other feed abound, and grass is plenty almost everywhere, the bird is much more rare. Yet he is here, and where the tamarack springs like the spears of an ancient host, or the giant hemlock shuts out the sun, or in the windfalls where the mighty trunks are piled so high as to make you hesitate, this grouse often spreads the broad, banded tail that so easily escapes the outer edge of the circle of best-aimed shot.

Many of the local hunters will tell you that you can do nothing with this grouse because "the brush is too thick." But who that knows the bird would have it otherwise? The miles one gladly tramps in the eastern woods to get even a glimpse

of its fan fading in the dark rotunda of the forest would not be travelled for a bird that rose in the open and made an easy mark. Moreover, a large bag of anything is, at last, distinctly out of fashion, even on this coast, is being rapidly forbidden by law, and the laws are being enforced. And the laws are made by those who best know what makes a day's sport with the gun.

And here he is full of his old tricks with some new ones adapted to the new conditions. And all are so natural, for he has had no persecution to make him study the art of escape as the quail has. One must not only know how to shoot in brush, but must also be in good practice, or only the roar of wings will reward his efforts and he will watch in vain for the falling of the brown line whose arrowy flight pierces the distant thicket with no sign of wavering. Here from a fallen tree rises a huge skein of upturned roots, and the bird is behind it before you can turn the gun upon it. The roots will stop nearly all the shot, but your only hope rests on a few getting through, for if you wait to see the whizzing mark on the other side it will be only when far out of reach, if in sight at all. For he knows as much about keeping upturned butts of a tree between you and him as about doing the same with the trunk of a tree.

Here is a bunch of tamaracks, so dense that

scarcely a ray of sunlight filters through to the carpet of needles beneath. What is the use of going into such stuff, where you almost have to crawl, and cannot swing the gun on either side without striking a tree? Surely a bird would be out of sight in ten feet of upward rise. Of course, and even in less than that. *Bbbbbbbb* goes an uproarious wing, and before the gun is halfway to your shoulder, a flash of reddish brown is out of sight in the tangle of twigs and branches above. But as you raise the gun you drop on one knee, and dimly along the iron rib you catch the line of the game's disappearance where a fading streak of fancied brown still glimmers in imagination's eye. But to the expert in brush the eye of fancy is often good enough, and at the report of the gun a whirl of brown and white with mottled breast curves downward through the shower of twigs and drift of circling feathers.

In a heavy mass of huckleberry bushes you hear another roar of wings, but you know that the former trick of dropping on one knee will not now avail, for the lower you drop the more sure you are to see nothing. And you cannot rise on tiptoe to see over the brush, for the bird knows too much to rise above it enough to let you see him. You have to shoot almost by the sound, with the slight aid from a faint glimpse, perhaps, of hazy wings as they cross some small opening.

In a twinkling your first barrel clears a road through the brush a little forward of the line of the bird's flight. And the second tunnels the smoke of the first a little farther ahead of where the wings are still resounding. As the sound ceases you go with mighty strain of expectation to look for a feather or two lodged on the top of the brush. But there is none there, none floating on the air, and as you realize that the bird sailed away on that silent, outspread wing that so closely imitates the flight of an arrow, you feel a mild resignation steal over you, somewhat akin to gladness that you have found something as smart as you are.

Even in the remotest wilds he is the same wary bird, wary by nature more than by education. Nowhere in the East does he know better how to hide and let you pass him than among the little dwarf huckleberries that gleam in scarlet on the slope of the Cascades. And where the crimson of the wild cherries and the golden light of the wild plum illumine the dark thicket he springs with that obstreperous wing whose music is but the more enchanting for being too quickly gone. And how could any of his race forget that old family trick of dodging behind a tree about the instant you are ready to pull the trigger, and then keeping in line with it until well out of shot? Nor has he forgotten that you will look for him again in the spot where he alights, and he will run off on one side, where

he can laugh at you for a while and then amuse you with the hubbub of his resounding wing where your best-aimed shot will never reach it.

Though plentiful nowhere on the coast, the red ruffed grouse is found throughout as large a range as the dusky grouse. High up in the tumbling hills, where new pentstemons in carmine and pink nod over crystal streams that foam from the heads of the higher gulches, he steals out from the deep, dark ranks of the spruce to take a look at the outer world. And still higher in the rugged mountains, where the last little blue lily gives up the struggle for life in the cold wet bog among the dwarf pines, he may shake the sunshine from his roaring wing and whizz down the glen at your approach. But the best hunting is lower down, where the chinquapin begins to tower into the stately tree it often becomes in Oregon, and where the golden green of the madrono makes such happy light against the sombre masses of the red fir. In autumn the bird may descend to the thickets of willow and alder that line the streams in the little valleys, or to the fringes of scrub oak and laurel that line the edges of the lower hills. Here one may get open shooting as he curls around on the outside of the line of brush, or in the black oaks and firs along the base of the hills may get some shooting out of trees well worthy of the name. I do not mean the miserable murder of shooting one off a limb with

a shotgun while it sits craning its neck at a dog barking below, or even the respectable business of shooting at the head of one with the rifle. The latter involves some hunting, for few things are harder to see than a ruffed grouse perfectly still in a tree. And to hit the small head with a single ball is about as hard as any rifle-shooting if the trees are of much height. But with the shotgun to hit one flying from a tree is one of the shots to boast of, and you must never be too elated with one or two good shots. How to make the bird fly if too high to scare out with stick or stone, is a matter of detail too long for the limits of this article, but if you throw anything at him, be sure and get your hand in position on the gun again before it reaches him.

Bbbbbbb goes the bird with a rush that surpasses the starting of any other of earth's creatures, and at the report of the first barrel, on goes the game as if feathered with the lightning's rays. Bang goes the second barrel as quickly as you can shift your finger to the next trigger, but the gay rover vanishes where the arms of the fir intertwine above, and not a feather drifts down from its whizzing line of brown and white around which the rapid wings seem but a reddish haze tinged with gray. You shot behind, of course, and the next time will be sure to hold far enough ahead. *Bbbbbbbbb* goes another, with a downward curve

you did not notice before, and do not notice now until it is too late. Bang goes the first barrel, but like a shaft of light the bird goes on, with the shot hissing just over his back. Bang goes the second barrel, with the shot both too high and behind, while the brown line glides out of sight among the trunks as swiftly and easily as the meteor among the stars of night.

THE DUSKY GROUSE

The largest ground bird of the Pacific Coast is the dusky grouse. It varies in size from a pinnated grouse of medium size to a sharp-tailed grouse of the largest. Its prevailing color is dark brown, shading to black, threaded with wavy lines of gray of somewhat bluish tinge. Underneath it runs into white dashed with brown and black, more or less finely mottled, especially about the neck and throat. According to Dr. Coues it is the same as the dusky or blue grouse of the Rocky Mountains, "a large, cumbrous bird, usually displaying stolidity or indifference to the presence of man, taking to trees when disturbed, and very easily slaughtered."

This description is a mistake as applied to the grouse of this coast. It is large and also cumbrous in flight compared with the ruffed grouse, and generally alights in trees when disturbed. But here it is anything but stolid or indifferent

to the presence of man, and is easily slaughtered only by those who know how to do it. The proper way to hunt it is with the small rifle, and then it is often one of the most puzzling of all birds to shoot. But even with the shotgun it is no easy victim, except under the same conditions that the wildest ruffed grouse of the eastern woods sometimes is. To many of our most ardent sportsmen it is best known by an occasional glimpse of brown fading among distant tree-trunks, or by the flutter of clumsy wings among the undergrowth. But those same wings carry it out of sight far too rapidly for the tyro, and when among the masses of foliage in the big trees even the sharpest eyes have all they can do to see it, while to shoot it artistically with the rifle needs all the keenness of eye and steadiness of hand the best expert can command. For these reasons it is considered fine game by even the experts of this coast, and no one who hunts it much ever calls it a fool. With the single exception of the ruffed grouse, it is by far the finest flavored of all the game-birds of the Pacific Coast.

The dusky grouse is not found in what is called southern California, though a few may be found in the higher ranges of Ventura and Santa Barbara counties. It is only where the Sierra Nevada swings around to join the Coast Range at Tehichipi that it begins to appear, though in

the more southern hills there is an abundance of the tall pines, deeply shaded glens, secluded thickets, and fern-clad swales that it most loves. In the high Sierra, where the silence of the woods is really oppressive at times, there is no more welcome sound than the wing of this grouse as it wheels into sight from some raspberry patch, scuds away over the carpet of pine needles, or bursts from the tangled vines that robe some rocky dell. On open ground it makes about the same mark as the pinnated grouse when full grown, but before it has the strong wing of late autumn. It makes few twists or curves; but, on much of the ground where it is found, it can vanish among the colonnades of great trunks in manner almost as ravishing as that of the ruffed grouse. And even where the timber is smaller, as among the dense tamaracks, it is no easy matter to turn the gun upon the large target before it is out of sight among the serried trunks. Nor is its rise so close as to make very easy shooting. In the timber it will be oftener over twenty yards than under, and very rarely near enough to allow any trifling in getting the gun ready. The courtesy we used to extend to a tenderfoot friend in giving him first shot at the pinnated grouse, with a comparative certainty of securing it after he had missed with both barrels, would generally result in a short larder with this grouse.

But there is an exception to this among grouse feeding in long grass early in the season, before the young are very strong of wing. In little open parks among heavy timber they may sometimes be found out in the grass, acting somewhat like pinnated grouse on stubble in early fall. In one of some thirty acres lying hidden among the towering ranks of Douglas fir that robe the Coast Range of southwestern Oregon, I once found them so plenty that in about an hour a companion bagged seventeen, all in single shots and rising in the open. As there was but one shotgun in the party, I played dog, dropping flat to the ground when one rose. So many of them lay almost as close as pinnated grouse that I have no doubt we could have tripled the bag with a good dog. Their flight was almost exactly like that of the pinnated, and with a dog there would have been little difference between that and ordinary summer prairie shooting. Such is by no means the rule however, and how to get good and certain shooting on this grouse is a problem not easily solved. Many do not attempt it, but rely on shooting with the rifle such as may fly up along the trail when travelling the great forests, or use them as a diversion from deer-hunting, or fishing, when it is not necessary to go far from camp. This grouse lays a dozen or fifteen eggs, and, like the young of the pinnated and ruffed grouse, the

little chicks know how to hide in the smallest cover. The old one, instead of flying away, flutters into a tree near at hand where she walks about on a limb and inspects you with a touching *krrrrrrrrrrrrrr-uk-uk*. Where they have never been disturbed, as in the wilder parts of Oregon, they allow you to come very near when doing this. Otherwise I can hardly see how it can be called a very tame bird, although it will vary in different places the same as the mountain-quail. Nor have I found it plenty enough to cloy any one who quickly tires of anything too easily done. During three weeks spent in the wildest part of the Coast Range of Oregon, in 1896, all the time beyond the last sight or sound of man or any of his works, I saw many every day, but nowhere were they as abundant and tame as in the little meadow where we got the seventeen. And I doubt if any one could average seventeen a day by any means, fair or foul, unless where concentrated by berries. In the Cascades I found it still more scarce.

Yet the dusky grouse of this coast has nearly all those qualities that charm so many who care nothing for the size or quantity of game. In the rich bottoms where the fir doubles its size, and the grand Port Orford cedar forms a roof against which the sun's brightest rays struggle in vain, this grouse springs from the shade with a roar of

wing that in the great silence of the forest seems like a sound from home. And equally dear as a companion it seems on the top of the soaring ridge, where the sweep of the storm has piled a thousand shattered trunks in ruinous confusion, leaving the sunlight to play uncheckered upon the scrubby chinquapin. And often a dozen or more may burst from where the service-berry still droops darkly blue in summer's waning, with a racket that makes you clutch the rifle as if it were that bear for which you have so long been looking. And there are few sights more attractive than one rising into the few patches of sunshine found in these dark woods, with its full form in bright relief against the thicket of salmon berry, blackberry, and blackcaps, with the large red huckleberry shining like fire against the dark background of the timber.

The best shooting on the dusky grouse is not with the shotgun, but with the rifle. There is rarely certainty enough in finding it to make it a special object of pursuit. In places you may travel all day without flushing one, and in the Sierra Nevada I once spent a week in the wildest portion without seeing one. But when you are out with the rifle and not afraid of alarming larger game, there is no finer mark than the head of this grouse. One standing upright on some huge limb a hundred feet away and in the dim light

of the forest will test your nerves as well as the accuracy of your favorite rifle in a way no other game is likely to do. For you must hit it in the head, or at least in the neck, or you will be ashamed to bring it into camp. Moreover, if hit in the body with a large rifle, it will be torn too much; and if struck with the twenty-two calibre in the body, it may fly away where you will never find it. Then, too, when hit in the head, you feel a satisfaction, as it comes fluttering down, that you cannot know if you hit it in the body. And you do not feel at all bad if the bird goes whizzing away with a feather or two from its neck fluttering down the breeze.

The best shooting of this kind is on the old cock grouse when "tooting." Perched on some high limb of a big tree he squats so low that he is very hard to see, especially as he looks more like a big knot than a bird, and sends forth a hollow *oooop — ooop — ooop*, so far-reaching and so deceptive that it is quite apt to mislead one. To locate the tree he is on is no easy trick, while getting your eye upon the game calls for the utmost keenness you can develop. There is nothing in deer or antelope hunting that calls for any finer use of sight, and by the time you see the bird you will generally find you have done some very skilful hunting. But you are not yet through. The sights of the rifle, so bright and clear against

the target or the imaginary game on which you try them, suddenly become very dim when you raise them on the head of this old cock. They were bad enough on other grouse perching lower and in thinner trees. But now you have to look harder for the sights than for the game. You may have discovered this before on deer in the distant aisles of the forest or on antelope in the dancing heat of the plain; but it is far worse now, especially as you often have to hold the rifle almost vertically, with the sunlight streaming down the sights. And often the woods are so dense there is not light enough even if the mark were large and clear. Then comes that provoking instant when you find yourself pulling the trigger, knowing it is a little off the centre, and realizing so well that nothing but the centre can be relied on. All these things contribute to make this grouse a bird to gladden the heart of those who love the woods more for what cannot be done than for what can, and, though it is a bird that rarely justifies a special trip for its pursuit like the quail, it is still a bright enough light in the forest to be counted a true game-bird.

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